




ZIPPORAH
THE
JEWISH **M**AIDEN

ILLUSTRATED



ZIPPORAH, THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

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Her father Eleazer kissed her most affectionately on her forehead.

ZIPPORAH, THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

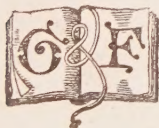
A Tale of the Times of Herod the Great.

BY MRS. M. E. BEWSHER,

AUTHOR OF 'THE GIPSY'S SECRET,' ETC.

'A child no more ! a maiden now—
A graceful maiden, with a gentle brow ;
A cheek tinged lightly, and a dove-like eye,
And all hearts bless her as she passes by !'

Illustrations by P. Priolo.



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PREFACE.



THIS domestic tale of Jewish life is no record of stirring events, but is connected by passing allusion with public matters of great interest at the epoch, extending from the death of Julius Cæsar to the year 37 B.C., when an end was put to the government of the Maccabees, or Asmoneans, after it had lasted nearly 130 years, by the surrender of Jerusalem to Herod, surnamed the 'Great,' who, at the head of a fine and numerous army, had besieged the Holy City for upwards of six months. This narrative may serve to show what were the doctrines, opinions, and practice of Jerusalem, and of pagan Rome. It also sets forth in striking contrast the modesty and virtue of the pious Jewish maiden, with the fascination and impurity of the heathen Cleopatra, who had ensnared Marc Antony, and thus wrought a tangled web of sin and misery.

It is hoped that the thread of fiction by which the manners and customs of the two different nations are set forth, may serve to impart a life-like reality to the whole, and help the reader to enter into the spirit of the men and manners of that particular time, when the whole of the known world expected a Deliverer, and the Jewish people particularly looked forward to the appearance of the Messiah to restore to them the kingdom of Israel. Many false prophets and fanatics arose, filling the minds of the populace with imaginary victories over their enemies; telling them in the name of the Lord, though the Lord had not sent them, that their city was impregnable, that no foe could prevail against it; so that when Herod appeared before the walls, and advised them to open the gates, the fury of the people was at its height, and they resolved to perish in the ruins rather than submit; and the consequence was, that when the Roman soldiers did enter Jerusalem, they were so exasperated at the fatigue they had suffered during so long and difficult a siege, that they filled the Holy City with blood and slaughter. It had been decreed that Herod, the Idumean, should be king of the Jews. Marc Antony was at Rome, and pos-

sessed of the sovereign power, when Herod arrived to bribe him to obtain the object of his desire:—thus fulfilling that ancient prophecy of the patriarch Jacob, ‘The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.’

The Lord never forgets His promises, however great and wonderful they are; but will surely perform them at the time He has appointed. He was now about to fulfil this, and before her death the Jewish Maiden had the happiness of beholding in His lowly cradle at Bethlehem, the Desire of all nations, the Messiah promised to her forefathers, the Saviour of the world.





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ZIPPORAH, THE JEWISH MAIDEN.

CHAPTER I.

ELEAZAR AND HIS FAMILY.

THE sun had scarcely risen upon Jerusalem, when Zipporah, the only daughter of Eleazar, left her private apartments for the gallery or open terrace extending around her father's dwelling. This house, like the greater part of those belonging to the opulent Jews of that epoch, was surrounded by very high walls, and built in such a way as not only to make it a comfortable dwelling, but also a secure retreat amid the troubles and seditions which at this time too often desolated the Holy City.

Above the ground-floor rose a single storey, the

windows of which consisted of apertures bored through a very thick wall, and closed by curtains. This floor had direct communication with the above-mentioned terrace, and was supported by a colonnade of gopher wood, blackened by age and exposure to the elements. A light balustrade ornamented the edge of the gallery, containing a great number of flowers and shrubs, which, added to a garden of roses at the back part of the enclosure, broke agreeably enough the sombre monotony of this ancient edifice.

Since the days of the first prophets, the luxury of gardens had existed at Jerusalem ; they were the favourite retreat of the females, who spent much of their leisure in training the vines which adorned the walls, or in cultivating the flowers. Groves were not allowed, for fear of inducing God's people to fall into idolatry.

Eleazar Ben-Ephraim was descended from the ancient race of Aaron ; but he belonged to a poor family, and would probably have always remained in obscurity, had not his superior acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages brought him under the notice of several persons distinguished in State policy.

As a rule, the Hebrews expressed great contempt for foreign nations, regarding them as infidels and barbarians, so much so that many of them disdained to learn their language. Some were even found who scrupled to use any other tongue than that spoken by angels in their intercourse with man, or which God Himself has employed in His revelations to His servant Moses. Notwithstanding this prejudice, some few persons, principally belonging to the upper classes, had decided on studying Greek and Latin,—the object of a few being to profit by the copiousness of these languages; others from want, or to strengthen the political intercourse they had with the Greeks and the Romans.

Eleazar was a proficient in the Latin tongue, and on this account he was entrusted with the correspondence between his nation and the new rulers of Judea, the Romans, at the time Jerusalem was under Pompey's power. He had exercised his knowledge in a way as honourable to himself as advantageous to his beloved country.

About this epoch Eleazar espoused, as his second wife, Rebekah, a relation of the reigning king, Antigonus.

During the course of this history, it will be neces-

sary to bear in mind that the Parthians, who had become masters of all Asia Minor and Syria, in the general confusion following the death of Julius Cæsar, took Jerusalem, and carried away Hyrcanus, king and high priest; that they barbarously mutilated him, thus incapacitating him from holding the sacred office of the priesthood, and put in his place Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, who had prevailed on them to aid him in his designs, by promising them a sum of one thousand talents and five hundred Jewish virgins.

Herod, afterwards surnamed the Great, was then governor of the palace for Hyrcanus. He left Jerusalem, went to Rome, and made Marc Antony acquainted with the state of affairs, offering him a large sum of money if he would acknowledge him sovereign of Judea. Antony received his request favourably; and, thanks to his patronage, joined to that of Octavius Cæsar, the Senate declared Antigonus an enemy to the Roman Republic, and ended by saluting Herod as lawful king.

After this necessary digression from our story, we will return to Rebekah.

This woman was just as ambitious and intriguing as her husband Eleazar was humble and an enemy

to all plots. She was anxious for him to rise in power, and he was quite innocent of all the manœuvres she had employed to this end, and by which he was nominated '*Sagan-Haccoanim*,' or next in power to the high priest, in preference to many others, who probably were better acquainted with the Law and Ritual, but who, unlike himself, were not next in rank to the royal family.

Antigonus united in his person the dignity both of king and high priest; and as his dissolute and effeminate character rendered the sacerdotal requirements disagreeable to him, and as he gave himself up almost entirely to the greatest acts of debauchery in his palace, Eleazar, who was now his vicegerent, became an important person, and might justly be considered the second ruler in the kingdom.

The numerous duties that this position imposed on Eleazar did not, however, at all diminish the tender and affectionate care that he took of Zipporah, the only child left him by his first wife, and who, at the time when our tale begins, had just attained her sixteenth year. He himself had taken the entire charge of her education, had taught her both Latin and Greek, so that at this tender age she surpassed nearly all the women of her nation

in general knowledge and learning. But whilst the careful father initiated his daughter into the numberless beauties of these two languages, he never failed to point out to her the falsehoods and follies which crowd the works of pagan authors, and he blamed them severely ; so Zipporah knew how to imitate the bee, and extract pure honey even from bitter and poisonous flowers.

As she had been brought up so near the Sanctuary, she found religion in some degree the material aim of her life. Besides, piety was like a privileged plant, growing naturally on the soil of Jerusalem. What feeling heart could listen to the sound of the sacred trumpets, calling the faithful to the ceremonies of their holy worship?—could contemplate the grandeur and beauty of the Temple, and think of the imposing and striking recollections connected with it?—could pass through the streets, where well-nigh every house recalled some thought of the Deity, and where, in the words of the prophet Habakkuk, ‘The stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answered it’?—could tread a soil whose dust had been sanctified by the steps of angels and prophets?—what feeling heart, I say, could have inhabited this city, where all spoke of the glory and

goodness of God, and not lift itself up to God in true piety, to adore the Author of so many mercies, so many wonders?

Such were a few of the solemn thoughts that occupied Zipporah, when, leaving her chamber at the dawn of day, she ascended the terrace, and, turning towards the Temple, which was only a short way from the house, addressed her Heavenly Father in earnest prayer.

She was interrupted in this devotional exercise by the arrival of Eleazar, who, having kissed her most affectionately on her forehead, made a sign for her to sit down near him under the shadow of a jessamine growing at the end of the gallery, for the sun began to shed its rays over the Holy City.

‘My child,’ said he, ‘I have great news to tell thee. Thou art well aware that the crown belonged to Herod, and that Antigonus deprived him of it by purchasing it from the Parthians. In his turn he now fears to lose it through the manœuvres of his enemies, and, to secure its possession to himself, he desires to buy the confirmation of his royalty from the Romans. He has chosen me to negotiate this business, as delicate as it is important. I confess to thee that this mission interferes very

considerably with my usual habits ; but, as a Jew, and above all as a real friend to my native country, I ought to long to see the end of the constant disputes which tear my beloved land to pieces ; and I think, as well as our prince, that, after God, the only resource remaining to us is the powerful intervention of the Romans. Let us hope that Messiah, so long promised to our fathers, will not delay to appear in the midst of His people, and re-establish among men that peace and concord which hitherto all our efforts have failed to obtain. But, Zipporah, why these tears ? why art thou so sorrowful ?’

‘My father,’ replied Zipporah, in a voice broken by sobs, ‘you are going to leave us !’

‘My child, I shall leave Jerusalem, but I shall not leave thee behind ; thou shalt not be separated from thy father—he will ever be thy protector and thy stay. It is my wish that thou shouldst accompany me to Rome, for I know not what presentiment tells me that very soon Jerusalem will again be exposed to all the horrors of a siege. . . . The massacres that Pompey’s soldiers committed when this city fell into their hands—the atrocities and excesses of all kinds to which the Parthians gave way, although calling themselves our allies and

friends, are still living in my memory ; and I much fear that scenes quite as bad, or maybe even more frightful still, will again take place in a short time.'

'Will my mother go with us?' asked Zipporah in a timid and confused mannner.

'No ; she will remain at Jerusalem.'

These words seemed to smooth and calm the anxious countenance of the young girl. She gave her father a look full of gratitude, and a sweet smile played around her lips, which before had been so trembling.

'I understand, Zipporah,' continued the priest, 'thou art afraid of being left alone with thy step-mother, and I forgive thee. Too much engrossed with the aggrandizement of her family, she would give thee a husband of her own choosing,—a man belonging to the turbulent and factious sect of the Pharisees, ruling to-day in Jerusalem. But thy father will never force thy inclination, and he can only laud the disgust thou feelest for the hypocritical man destined for thee. Comfort thyself, my precious child. As long as I live, I shall know how to protect thee ; and if I die, the Lord will never forsake thee.'

A stifled sigh escaped from Eleazar's bosom. He

could not confess to his daughter all the grief he felt at seeing discord reign in his family—he who, in marrying Rebekah, had only thought of giving his child a second mother.

After a few moments' silence, he turned to Zipporah, and said: 'To-morrow we shall go together to Court. The King has expressed his wish to see her who is to accompany me on my travels.'

'And which of your dependants have you settled to take with us?'

'Our kinsman Zechariah, who has already lived some time in Rome, and who has offered to join us in our travels, has advised me to take Jehoiakim, one of the porters of the Temple. He is a man full of courage, and deserving of our entire confidence. I think it useless to impress upon thee the necessity of keeping secret the object of our journey. It is the King's interest that no one should be made aware of it. However, I except thy friend Paulina, with whom thou mayest converse on the subject quite unreservedly—it is even my wish that thou shouldst ask her advice, which she is calculated to give thee better than any one else. But it is some time since she came to see us; is it likely she is ill?'

'Yes, she has suffered a great deal the last few

days ; however, she is better now, though not able to get up. I think of going to see her this evening.'

'Thou art right, my child. She is so gentle, so pious, so full of affection and kindness for our family. I must leave thee now, Zipporah, my duties call me elsewhere ; but I trust we shall meet again after sunset.'

Then Eleazar went away, whilst his daughter watered the flowers on the terrace, before returning to her own room to go on with her needlework. Her talent in this line was so great, that she not only embroidered the robes and girdles worn by her father on feast-days, but she had attained the chief object of her desire, the being allowed to embroider the hangings belonging to the Sanctuary of the Holy Temple at Jerusalem.





CHAPTER II.

PAULINA THE PROSELYTE.

PAULINA was the widow of a distinguished Roman officer, who had fixed her abode at Jerusalem ever since that city had been taken by Pompey. She had followed her husband to Palestine, and had shared in all the dangers of the siege, when, towards the end, she was surrounded by the Jews in an unexpected sally, and made prisoner, at the same time that her husband and the troop commanded by him fell into the power of the besieged. She was in danger of being the victim of the fury of the populace, when she was rescued by Eleazar's wife, who took her home, and nursed her with the greatest tenderness, until she was completely cured of the wounds she had received.

Rachel, Eleazar's wife, took the favourable opportunity of Paulina's convalescence to tell her of the one true God. Very soon she had the happiness of seeing her renounce idolatry, abjure her errors, and pray to be placed among the 'Proselytes of Justice.' From that moment she became much attached to Eleazar's family; and though she had an only brother residing at Rome, she determined on staying in the Holy City, and spending the remainder of her life in prayer and good works. She was longing for the day,

'When a star should rise o'er the darkness of Judah,
When a branch yet should flourish on Jesse's proud stem;
And Zion should triumph o'er those that subdued her,
Yea, triumph in giving a *Saviour* to them!'

The day was already declining, when Zipporah, accompanied by her attendants, reached the house occupied by Paulina. She had just got up to enjoy the fresh evening air; she was sitting on the terrace which formed the roof of the house, and whence she had a beautiful and extensive view of a great part of the Holy City.

'Oh, my dear Zipporah!' she exclaimed, on perceiving the priest's daughter, 'how kind of you to

come and comfort me in my sufferings by your presence !’

‘I only wish I had been able to come sooner,’ replied Zipporah, embracing her friend ; ‘but the near approach of the feast of Pentecost obliged me to work very constantly and closely, to enable me to complete the embroidery which I am anxious to let my father wear at that time. But how are you, my dear friend ?’

‘Well—at least, well enough to be able to get up ; and that is a decided improvement after such acute sufferings. The wound, which had become opened afresh in consequence of over-exertion, begins to close, and I hope to be able to return your calls before long. This is, however, one of the results of my curiosity, I dare not say my courage, when this siege, so disastrous to your people—But why should I complain ? Without this imprudence, I should never have had the opportunity of learning all I know to-day ; I should still prostrate myself before blocks of stone, that I should have called gods ; and I should not have the happiness of knowing your good father, nor you, my dear Zipporah. May the name of the Lord be praised !’

‘Amen !’ replied Zipporah ; and she began to

explain to her friend all the reasons which had decided her father to allow her to accompany him to Rome.

‘My dear child,’ answered Paulina, ‘I respect your father’s will ; nevertheless, I fear that, in wishing to save you from one danger, he may draw others upon you that he little expects. He does not know all the corruption of this city, where he hopes to shelter you from the disorders which always accompany a siege. After all, your duty is to submit and obey. It is just possible that my fears may be ill founded. It is possible, also, that God wishes to try your faith ; but do not forget that, if He drew Daniel forth out of the den of lions, He can save you too in all the perils in which you may be placed. Place yourself with confidence in His arms ; He will never leave you nor forsake you.’

‘I thank you for your advice, which is worth more than all human wisdom. However, as God orders us to have recourse to the counsel of the wise, allow me to ask you how I ought to conduct myself in the world, so new and strange to me, and where I shall soon find myself.’

‘My dear friend, I wish my wounds were sufficiently cured, so that I might go with you, and be

with you in the continual bustle of men and things which distinguishes Rome from all other cities ; it is impossible to give you advice for every circumstance that may happen. It is also so long since I left Italy, that I hardly know if I should recognise myself in this chaos of opinions, of manners, and of customs, which change under each fresh master, and each time that a nation passes under the yoke of the victors. I will, however, endeavour to satisfy your father's wishes. Come nearer me, for you are aware that at Jerusalem, as throughout the whole empire, "walls have ears," and I should fear that the pacific mission which your father has undertaken might become a cause of trouble, of treachery, and of disorder.'

These last words had been said in a low voice, and the conversation continued in the same tone about half an hour, without any one coming to disturb the two friends.

'My child,' said Paulina, 'you know that I have a brother at Rome, who has ceased all correspondence with me since I embraced the law of Moses. I have done all I can to destroy the unjust ideas which remove him from his sister, and the people to whom she has become attached : my efforts have

been fruitless. However, if at any time you are so situated that the title of ambassador, with which your father is invested, is not sufficient to protect you, go to him, speak to him of his sister : he could not reject your petition ; he will help you. In order that he may recognise you as my dear friend, I am going to give you a gold chain, which he presented to me just before my departure for Palestine. Place it round your neck, and never leave it off.'

So saying, she unfastened a massive gold chain that she always was in the habit of wearing, and gave it to her young friend.

'This is no vain talisman,' added she ; 'it is a simple sign, a mark that the Law does not forbid. It will be, at the same time, a remembrance of your friend. We know not how long we may be separated ; perhaps'—

'Oh, Paulina ! have pity on my weakness ; do not speak so,' interrupted Zipporah. 'It is quite true that we know not what hour may be the last of our life ; but let us hope that the God of goodness, who has united us by ties so sweet and pure, will allow us to see each other again, and weep together over the misfortunes which afflict our people, whilst awaiting the great Redeemer of our land.'

‘Doubtless your stepmother sees you leaving your home with a feeling of vexation and annoyance?’

‘Yes, Paulina, and this is what grieves me the most. I had hoped that by my attentions I might have won her heart; but it is hard and unfeeling, like that of this proud Pharisee whom she would give me for husband, notwithstanding my father’s express wish to the contrary. Ah! my dear friend, if the remembrance of my poor mother were the only link which attached me to her, this would be quite sufficient to make me constantly regret her; but when I see myself subject to a woman whom I would love, and who— Alas! my suffering makes me forget that my father’s wife ought to be a second mother to me.’

A flood of tears relieved Zipporah’s oppressed breast, and her friend wept with her in her distress.

‘My friend,’ continued Zipporah, ‘but why do I thus make you sad?—I who ought to comfort you, or at least recollect that you are suffering! Perhaps I have tired you as well?’

‘No, no, you do not fatigue me; your presence and your conversation do me good. If I suffer, you suffer too, Zipporah; and where is the being in this

world who can comfort another without also requiring to be comforted as well ?’

Zipporah did not reply, but she took Paulina’s hand and pressed it affectionately.

Meantime the sun had set behind the hills surrounding the Holy City. Zipporah then called to mind that her father expected her, so she bade her friend good-bye, adding,

‘We shall very soon meet again in the Lord’s house, and pray together before saying farewell.’

The two friends embraced each other ; and when Zipporah had summoned her attendants, she hastened homewards.

On entering the house, she found her stepmother waiting to inquire what dress she intended to wear on the morrow, to be presented at Court.

‘The one that I embroidered myself, and wore at the last festival,’ replied the young girl, with respectful timidity.

‘What ! that old-fashioned dress, which would have suited Ruth very well when she went gleaning ! However, I have already told you several times that the Roman fashions are the only ones worn by people of distinction.’

‘My father thinks that the daughters of Jerusalem

ought to be proud to wear the same costume as their ancestors, and to despise Gentile fashions—above all, those of the Romans, the conquerors of our native land.’

‘Fashion belongs to no party, and I cannot allow you to dress like the daughter of one belonging to the lowest class of society.’

‘I wish I could obey you, mother, but my father has expressly commanded me’—

‘Is it only your father who has the right of ordering you?’ replied Rebekah, her eyes flashing, and her cheeks red with anger. ‘Think of it well, or I shall show you that above all things it is dangerous for you to disobey me.’

At these words she walked away with an air of offended dignity, so that Zipporah, who for a long time had not seen such a threatening look, followed her with her eyes moistened with tears, and her heart bursting with sobs, but resolved to tell her father of all that had just passed, and to be guided entirely by his decision in the matter.



CHAPTER III.

[ZIPPORAH AND HER STEPMOTHER.

THE next day, after morning service at the Temple, at the hour in which the ministers and officers were preparing to go to the King's palace, Zipporah returned to her room to dress. Her father had expressly enjoined her to make no change whatever in her costume, not wishing, so he said, to blush with shame before the King, who was likewise the high priest, in presenting his only daughter clad in heathen garments, recalling in so painful and striking a manner that the people of God, the most ancient nation in the world, had fallen into the power of barbarians.

Thus upheld by paternal authority against all the caprices of her stepmother, Zipporah put on the dress that she had embroidered most tastefully with

gold, and a profusion of lovely flowers of varied hue. The sleeves were of the richest gauze, adorned with ribbons entwined with exquisite taste. Her under garments, consisting of the finest linen, reached to her ankles; they were ornamented with borders of a deep blue colour, and richly embroidered. Her bust was covered with a splendid stomacher of byssus—a species of silk of a bright golden shade, made of the down taken from a large shell of the mussel family, and found on the shores of the Mediterranean; for at the epoch of which we are speaking, the silkworm had not yet been robbed of its precious covering. Her luxuriant and beautiful hair hung in long tresses behind her head; her sandals of badger-skin were fastened with real gold buckles; she also wore very strong and massive rings of this precious metal on her wrists and ankles.

Rich and brilliant colours bespoke elevated rank; and at this time the costume we have described was what was considered suitable for a Jewish maiden of high family.

But in whatever style of dress Zipporah appeared, she gave more charm to it than she received from it. The elegance of her slight figure, the admirable

regularity of her features, joined to the sweet modesty of her countenance and bearing, made the priest's daughter a beautiful girl.

Her large brown eyes, soft as those of the dove, and, moreover, full of intelligence and feeling, were surmounted by two delicately black arched eyebrows ; her vermilion lips spoke of the benevolence and the peace of her soul ; and, if naturally pale, the least emotion animated her cheeks with the richest and most charming colour.

It was not so with Rebekah. In order to disguise natural defects and the ravages caused by time, she was obliged to have recourse to every effort of art. Her face was covered with paint, and her eyebrows had been so cleverly pencilled as almost to join each other : this was the Roman fashion, then so much in vogue.

Besides bracelets, rings, chains, worthy of the magnificence of the Roman costume worn by her, and which we think it useless to detail in this story, small silver bells decorated her shining sandals, and she held in her hand a box of great value filled with perfume.

She had already completed her toilet, as well as Zipporah, when Eleazar, dressed in his sacerdotal

robe, came to join them, and announce to them that it was time to go. As the streets of Jerusalem were in many parts steep, and even precipitous, few conveyances were used in the interior of the city. However, on grand occasions, they made use of uncovered litters, and Rebekah's was now waiting for her at the door. She got into it, followed by her husband and Zipporah, and they advanced slowly towards the western part of Jerusalem, where the palace of the Maccabees was situated.

It had rather the appearance of a fortress than of a royal residence, being encircled by a massive and high wall, terminating in a platform, where the sentinels paced backwards and forwards.

Three of the angles on the wall were flanked by small towers; the fourth rested against a higher and stronger tower overlooking the city; on its top floated proudly the standard of the Maccabees.

In the first court, near the entrance-gate, large brazen baths were ranged, filled with water, in order that those who had contracted any impurity on their way to the palace might purify themselves. The Pharisees, and all those who had any particular pretension to holiness, never failed to wash their arms as far as the elbow; while, in touching the sacred

inscription placed over one of the side-posts of the door, they always uttered in a loud and solemn voice the usual prayer.

Detachments of the King's guard were drawn up in file along the side of the enclosed wall. The soldiers composing them were mounted on superb war-horses. They were chiefly young men of good family, as remarkable for their effeminacy and impudence as for the richness of their costume, and altogether worthy, in every respect, of the dissolute king whom they were charged to defend. Their breastplates or cuirasses were of polished brass; around their loins was a girdle, ornamented with precious stones, and supporting their sword; a bow and arrows completed their armour. After having passed through a beautiful hall, those who had come to offer their homage to their sovereign entered a large room, used as a reception-chamber, and hung with the richest tapestry. In the middle of this place, on a raised throne, was seated the King, clothed in a purple robe, wearing a massive gold chain around his neck, and on his head the crown of Hyrcanus, the first of his family who had worn the diadem and assumed the title of king. His sword was suspended behind his throne, which was sur-

rounded by a detachment of his guard ; for, knowing that he was a usurper, he feared treachery, and wished to be constantly prepared to defend by force what he was well aware he had gained by cunning and deception.

The sweetest perfumes burned in beautiful golden caskets in the four corners of the reception-room ; and as there was scarcely a female in this large assembly who did not carry some sort of precious scent in a small box, the atmosphere was literally embalmed with delicious odours. The ear, too, had its pleasures, for the royal music, composed by the first artistes, was heard at intervals, and songs and harmonious sounds filled the building.

This was altogether a new scene for Zipporah, who until this time had lived in a seclusion almost total ; but it did not have the same effect on her as it often has on many young girls. Accustomed all her life to the majestic ceremonies of a pure and holy worship, she looked with indifference upon what excited the swarm of flatterers surrounding the prince. Tired even by the perpetual motion, she bowed her head, as though impatient to see the end of it all.

‘ My daughter,’ said Rebekah to her, on noticing

this, 'do you consider it proper for the daughter of the deputy high priest thus to look down—she who ought, on the contrary, to rule over the crowd? Is it not quite enough that your dress makes you absurd? must you also by your demeanour show your disdain for this assembly?'

'I despise no one,' replied Zipporah.

'But any one would say so to see you. Remember that you are the daughter of one next in power to the high priest, and, what is more, that you belong to the royal family. Avoid this taciturn deportment, and raise your eyes.'

Unfortunately for the young girl, her father was conversing with some priests, and could not hear what was being said by his wife, so that poor Zipporah was compelled to listen to the whole of her stepmother's lecture without the power of replying. She tried to carry out her wishes, but, raising her head, she noticed that every one's attention was directed to her.

The timid maiden blushed, and could scarcely restrain her tears. However, she had no leisure to give herself up to melancholy reflections, for the music ceased, and Eleazar approached his family. 'My child,' said he in a low voice to Zipporah, 'I

see thy embarrassment, but it will soon be over ; only remember that modesty is the chief beauty of the daughters of Jerusalem.' And taking Zipporah's hand, he advanced with the crowd in the direction of the throne.





CHAPTER IV.

THE PALACE OF ANTIGONUS.

ALL armed as he was, Antigonus presented an effeminate and delicate appearance. The languor of his voice, his eyes without expression, his pale cheeks, notwithstanding the various cosmetics which it was well known he used to give them a colouring—everything bore witness to the sad consequences of a life of debauchery and indolence. His clothes were sumptuous, but they were worn with quite as much negligence as bad taste. This prince seemed to contemplate the multitude around him with perfect indifference, and nothing roused him from his apathy but the sight of a face more serious than those in the habit of approaching him ; then he would give a penetrating look, as though he suspected treachery, darting at

the same moment a rapid glance at his sword and his guards.

Few of the courtiers assembled round his throne received a more distinguished reception than Eleazar and his family.' His eye was soon attracted by Zipporah's beauty ; he lavished no end of personal compliments on the innocent and charming Jewish maiden. His marked attentions were anything but agreeable to one who possessed humility :

' The loveliest, sweetest flower
That bloomed in Paradise, and the first that died,
Which rarely blossom'd since on mortal soil.
It is so frail, so delicate a thing,
'Tis gone if it but look upon itself ;
And she who ventures to esteem it hers,
Proves by that single thought she has it not.'

Antigonus was piqued by her manner, surprised at her quiet dignity, as he whispered to her, that, had he been aware what an ornament Jerusalem was about to lose, he could never have consented to select her father as his ambassador, still less have allowed his daughter to accompany him to Rome.

Zipporah was much relieved when she could retire from the throne, for the King's gaze did not please her ; but scarcely had she once more

mixed with the crowd, than she saw the Pharisee Oreb coming near her,—the man whom her step-mother had so earnestly exhorted her to accept for her husband, the man who had always inspired her with an irresistible antipathy.

The length and pretentious oddness of his dress, of which the cut was as singular and fantastic as the stuff was common, plainly showed that the wearer was a false devotee, full of self-conceit,—one of those hypocrites who merited most justly to be compared by our blessed Saviour to ‘whited sepulchres.’ To prove that he had taken part in the morning prayers, he still wore around his forehead and left arm his phylacteries, or frontlets of parchment, on which fragments of the Law were written, and which were unusually long, as though to imply that his piety surpassed that of others. The long blue fringes or trimmings for the four corners of his mantle dragged on the ground; and he had multiplied the knots so cleverly, that they served to remind him of several hundred precepts of the Law. Then he repeated them aloud whilst walking in the streets, aided by this species of rosary in his hand. On approaching Zipporah, he changed his grave aspect, and put on a simpering smile.

‘Charming Zipporah,’ he said, in a soft, flattering voice, ‘forgive me if I have not yet fulfilled my duty in presenting you my most respectful homage ; but I have been exceedingly busy surveying the erection of a tomb that I am having constructed for one of the prophets. I am fatigued, depressed, for I have not yet taken any food, because I have made a vow to fast the third and sixth day ; but your presence refreshes me like the dew, even as the dew of Hermon refreshes the plants which have become dry and shrivelled with the heat of the sun. Oh, you who are more beautiful than the chaste Susannah, than Judith, than—beautiful Zipporah ! will you always continue insensible to my vows, deaf to my entreaties ?’

‘I have already given you an answer several times,’ said Zipporah, making an effort to rejoin her father, who was standing at a short distance when Oreb had accosted her.

‘Incomparable Zipporah,’ pursued the Pharisee, ‘your lips’—

‘Spare me your flattery ; I ought not to listen to it.’

‘Proud young creature !’ said Oreb, changing his tone, and attempting to catch hold of her dress. ‘I

must give you a last warning. Your stepmother is an Asmonean ; she has doubtless informed you of what I am now going to repeat. When King Alexander Jannæus was on his dying bed, his wife Alexandra trembled in thinking of the hatred that our sect bore her and her entire family. He advised her to be reconciled with the Pharisees if she wished to gain possession of the crown and the affection of the people. He added that no one could have better friends than the Pharisees when they loved, nor more dangerous enemies when they hated. Alexandra followed his advice ; she retained the dignity of queen. And you, young fool, if you care to preserve the throne of beauty and of the good name you enjoy to-day, take good care not to offend a Pharisee by disdaining to marry him.'

'Your threats do not alarm me ; I have on my side both God and my father.'

Having said these words in a tone which, though firm, had nothing insulting in it, Zipporah rejoined her father, whilst Oreb retired on one side, that those near him might not notice the disturbance of his demeanour.

In the meantime, refreshments had been brought in, consisting of snow from Mount Lebanon, kept

since the winter, and with which they had mixed several perfumes, so that it somewhat resembled modern ices ; wines of different sorts, richly spiced ; pomegranates, fruits of all descriptions, and pastry.

The Pharisees scrupulously abstained from tasting anything, and retired on one side, to show that they kept the fast, which pride, certainly not piety, made a law to them ; and they assumed an air of displeasure and disgust, as though the odour of the provisions being served up to the guests offended their organ of smell.

When every one was satisfied, music and singing were resumed ; afterwards, the company separated into several groups, some chatting over the news of the day, others amusing themselves by proposing and resolving parables and enigmas.

This kind of amusement dates from very ancient times. It is somewhat rare for people to give themselves up so entirely to pleasure and gaiety as on this occasion ; but whilst the reception-hall still re-echoed with the noisy sounds of merriment, a sudden movement was noticed at the entrance.

Some retired quickly to the opposite end of the room, uttering exclamations of surprise and terror. Others grouped themselves around the mysterious

being who had ventured to enter unannounced and to disturb their amusements. Several of the bystanders exclaimed: 'That is Sihor, the Black Shadow; that is Sihor! Sihor!'

Whence came this man, and what was his real name? So far no one had been able to find out. It was only a short time ago that he had shown himself at Jerusalem, or rather in the caverns and among the tombs surrounding the city. As he only came forth from these dismal retreats during the night, and was always enveloped in a mantle of very thick brown cloth, people had given him the name of the 'Black Shadow,' or simply 'Sihor,' the 'Black.' Avoiding all intercourse with man, he sometimes during the night ascended the height of a rock, to apostrophize the Holy City, and make threatening menaces and solemn predictions.

His appearance at Court in open day caused general surprise; and although, as we have said, several persons had gone away from him, caused by a species of terror quite unaccountable to themselves, others, moved by irrepressible curiosity, pressed eagerly around him.

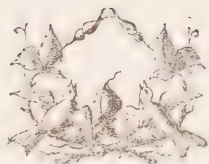
His almost gigantic stature would have been quite sufficient to awe the crowd, even if all the

features of his countenance and the motions of his body had not been formed to excite both respect and fear. Time had deeply furrowed his brow, but still his expansive and noble forehead spoke rather of vigour than of old age. His eyes, shaded by heavy eyebrows, glittered like lightning piercing a dark cloud. His step was firm ; and his head, covered with long black hair, which almost met his venerable beard, joined to his unusual height, raised him above all the persons around him.

It would have been difficult to picture the figure of a patriarch or a prophet more august than he was. The deep silence he maintained, his majestic and noiseless walk, for he had bare feet, imparted to him a character almost supernatural and divine. All eyes were fixed upon him, as though they were fascinated ; all remarks ceased, and each one seemed to wait with impatience until he should stop and speak ; they burned to know what had brought him to the palace. He continued to advance towards the throne, when a woman dared to bar his passage.

This was Lydia, a concubine of the prince, over whom she possessed almost absolute power. Although she felt no timidity, and her boldness even

approached effrontery, this woman found herself somewhat disconcerted at being face to face with Sihor ; but recovering almost immediately from her emotion, she addressed him sharply.





CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET SIHOR.

‘**W**HO is this frightful creature?’ exclaimed Lydia, in an arrogant tone of voice; ‘who is this horrible man, who dares present himself in such unseemly costume before the King, and disturb our pleasure?’

‘Silence, daughter of the Chaldeans!’ replied Sihor in a thundering voice, raising his right arm; ‘cover thy head with ashes and dust, and utter cries of woe, thou who art seated in the presence of the King, and hast sung before him, accompanying thyself on thy cithern. Thou art one of the beings whose end shall be as bitter as wormwood—sad as the shipwrecked one, who is carried away from the shore by the violence of the waves.’ Then turning towards the other women, who listened to him and trembled:

‘And you, daughters of Zion,’ continued he, ‘ye who have opened your hearts to vainglory, do you forget these words of the prophet Isaiah?—“The Lord will take away the bravery of your tinkling ornaments about your feet, and your cauls, and your round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent; and instead of well-set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty. . . . And your gates shall lament and mourn; and you, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground.”’

Lydia bit her lips; she tried to assume a look of contempt, but she became pale and silent. The embarrassment felt by the other women was quite as apparent; some went away, others began to whisper together.

Rebekah was about the only one whose counte-

nance showed no signs of emotion. She said in an undertone to her husband: 'This is doubtless some enthusiast, who, having lost his reason, imagines himself inspired by Heaven; unless, indeed, he be a traitor, who'—

She had not time to finish the sentence, for Sihor, coming near Zipporah, said to her: 'Give thyself up neither to fear nor sorrow, worthy and pious daughter of Jerusalem; it is not to thee that I address my prophetic voice. However, thou wilt be exposed to many dangers, but God will be with thee; thy piety will be thy safeguard. Look at her, and blush, you who wear the costume of the heathen! ye women who only deserve to be slaves! How are you fallen from your ancient glory! In olden times, when your forefathers were taken captive, they hung their harps upon the willows, because they would not sing the Lord's song in a strange land—yea, they sat down by the rivers of Babylon, they wept when they remembered Zion. But you, O degenerate daughters of Jerusalem, you turn to account the marks of your bondage; you make an ornament of the chains imposed on you by your idolatrous conquerors; you laugh and dance before the altar of Baal in the very heart of the Holy City.

Woe unto you when the Lord in His anger shall lay His arm upon you !’

No one dared reply, and the reception-hall became full of confusion and disorder. Just then Antigonus approached, leaning on the arm of one of his favourites, and surrounded by a group of courtiers.

‘And thou, O King!’ said Sihor, stretching out his arm towards him, ‘art thou truly a Maccabee?—a descendant of the brave Judas, who invested himself with his cuirass like a giant, and protected the army with his terrible sword?—of this Judas, who in his combats resembled a lion roaring after his prey? His banner floats on the tower of thy palace, but where is the intrepid heart that palpitated at the sound of warlike trumpets? Ah! thou listenest to woman’s seductive voice, thou amusest thyself with feasting in the midst of thy courtiers, like Belshazzar; but what wouldst thou say, if, like him, thou sawest a mysterious hand writing the warning of thy downfall on the wall? Notwithstanding, warriors are preparing their forces against thee; the war-horse already shakes his mane, the spark flashes from his eye, the wind carries off the foam from his flanks, the earth trembles under his

feet, and the echoes repeat his neighing. The Romans, the club with which God crushes the nations, are ready to cast thee down from thy throne, and the moment is nigh when'—

'What madman have we here?' exclaimed Antigonus, pale with anger, and trembling from fright. 'Audacious creature! who has advised thee to come and set me at defiance in my own palace? Doubtless thou art some Herodian, on whom rods and chains will impose silence. Remove him!'

As this order was addressed to no one in particular, none of the bystanders seemed disposed to act upon it, and Sihor continued to speak in a tone both calm and imposing.

'Blind prince! thou art rushing to thy ruin. I hold not my mission from Herod; I have received it from a King more powerful than Herod, even from Him whose terrible voice says to the waves of the ocean, "So far ye shall come, and no farther." Oh, vanity of vanities! Have not the Maccabees constructed a tomb at Joppa for their descendants—for those who shall never be born? Thou art the last of thy race, and the marble cells of this monument will await in vain those who were to fill it, for the name of Asmonean shall be extinguished.'

‘Cowards!’ cried the King again, his eyes burning with rage, and fixed sternly on his irresolute courtiers; ‘are you in league with this impostor, that you do not crush him? I suppose, then, that I must.’

So saying, he drew his sword, and was on the point of attacking Sihor; but he suddenly stopped, and casting a rapid glance behind him, as though he feared treachery against his life, he said to his guards: ‘Soldiers! treat this impudent fellow as the prophet Samuel once treated Agag, king of the Amalekites: let his blood besmear this pavement, and the dogs quarrel for his tongue.’

At the same time, Antigonus placed himself in the midst of his guards, for he mistrusted all those who were about him; but whilst the abashed soldiers were looking at one another, not daring to obey the King’s orders, Sihor wrapped himself in his mantle of coarse cloth, crossed his arms on his breast, cast down his eyes, and went out at a slow pace by a side door which stood open before him.

Scarcely had he disappeared, than the greater part of the bystanders, recovering from their surprise, set off in pursuit of him. Emboldened by the presence of his guards, and furious at the insult

which he had just received before his entire Court, Antigonus asked, in a furious accent, what had become of this villain.

The courtiers, fearing to be accused of complicity with Sihor, failed not to point out the door where he had gone out. The King rushed to it immediately, followed by his soldiers. Sword in hand, they traversed the lobbies, the passages, the courts, and the apartments of the palace; but their researches were useless—they could nowhere discover Sihor. He seemed to have made good his name by disappearing like a shadow.

Whilst they were wearing themselves out in vain efforts, Eleazar and his daughter had retired on one side, to communicate to each other their thoughts in a low voice. They looked upon Sihor as a being only to be regarded with a strong feeling of veneration. His manners were calm, his voice grave and full of conviction.

Sihor's great age, the holiness and wisdom written on his features, seemed to give him the right of being considered the recipient of heavenly communications; and the mysterious manner of his sudden arrival, and afterwards of his disappearance, tended to strengthen Eleazar's daughter in her belief.

At first, Zipporah had been alarmed at the prophet's words, warning her that she would be exposed to great dangers; but the assurance of help from Heaven, given immediately afterwards, had comforted her, and she only felt a vague uneasiness as to the nature of the evils threatening her. What enemies could she have? she who had never nurtured a hurtful thought against any one—she who had never harmed a creature?

She recalled the conversation between herself and Paulina the preceding evening, and she determined to ask her guidance again, before undertaking a journey that might probably prevent her returning to her native land for some long time.

As to Eleazar, though he perhaps had some doubts whether the prophecies of the Black Shadow were of divine inspiration as regarded the King, his own presentiments accorded entirely with them. He was, however, far too prudent to impart his thoughts to any one, even to his beloved daughter. He knew full well that their lives would not be safe should the violent and cruel Antigonus discover their fears, which he would look upon immediately as treason.

When Zipporah reached home, she retired to her.

private apartment, and the night was already far advanced before the agitation of her mind enabled her to taste the sleep of which she stood in so much need after the excitement and fatigue of this eventful day.





CHAPTER VI.

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST.

WHEN Zipporah awoke the next morning, the rays of the sun gilded the summits of the mountains near Jericho, and the heights beyond the Jordan, casting its golden beams on the pinnacles of the Temple, as though to announce the feast of Pentecost, about to be celebrated at Jerusalem. Antigonus had intended to officiate in the religious ceremonies of this day, in his quality of high priest. Purely political motives made him feel it a duty to gratify the popular feeling, for he was well aware that more importance was attached to the exercise of his sacerdotal functions than to the rights of royalty. But his fears and suspicions prevailed. Persuaded by what had happened the preceding evening at the palace that there were

conspirators in the city only waiting for a favourable opportunity to attempt his life, he therefore dared not appear before the public in his capacity of high priest—still less go to the Temple, where his guards would not be allowed to be with him; so he pretended to be suddenly indisposed, and sent to beg his deputy, Eleazar, to officiate in his stead.

It was with visible satisfaction that Rebekah saw her husband invested with the pontifical robe; whilst he, on the contrary, far from being elated with it, appeared almost overwhelmed. He remembered that in these troubled times elevated posts were often surrounded with great dangers; and the anxiety of his countenance showed plainly that he found the honour more troublesome than worthy of envy.

As to Zipporah, she no longer considered the deputy high priest as her father. In him she now beheld the high priest of the Hebrews, the first minister of God, and her filial piety was changed into religious respect. The awful name of Jehovah inscribed on the old man's forehead; the mysterious virtue connected with the Urim and Thummim of his breastplate, by which in former times they had consulted the Lord; the holy ephod; the solemn

recollections called up by the different parts of his vestments, as well as by the grandeur and holiness of his duties, all tended to inspire Zipporah's soul with so profound a feeling, that she cast down her eyes, as before an angel descended in the midst of men.

The priests entered to accompany Eleazar to the Temple; and Rebekah, accompanied by her step-daughter, went into one of the galleries reserved for the women, near the entrance-gate, on the side of the east, the part where the greatest number of persons came in. At this moment the pious procession of pilgrims arrived at the mountain on which the Temple was situated, and, each one with his basket on his shoulders, entered the court.

Eleazar finished the morning service with an exhortation, in which he reminded his hearers of the intention of the Feast, the cause of its institution, and warned them to be grateful for the inexpressible blessings which had been granted to them, to the exclusion of the remainder of the world. Finally, he bestowed on the people the solemn benediction, and retired into the interior of the sacred edifice.



CHAPTER VII.

OREB THE PHARISEE.

IT was forbidden to eat anything on feast-days until the hour of noon ; so it was natural that all who had presented their offerings should feel anxious to reach their lodgings in the city, or the tents pitched outside its walls, in order to partake of refreshment.

Rebekah, anxious to reach home, was one of the first to leave the Temple, and hurried Zipporah, who did not appear at all willing to curtail her devotions. When they arrived at the house, refreshments were immediately brought ; and then the maiden went into the rose-garden situated in the middle of the back court, where was a sun-dial drawn on a hemisphere of stone, with a column for support.

Zipporah, absorbed in thought, was walking in

this court, when Rebekah entered, and asked her to come for a walk. The maiden accepted the invitation with pleasure, and went to call her attendants, who soon brought a very richly ornamented canopy for her and her stepmother, and, thus shaded from the heat of the sun, they descended into the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

All those who returned from the services in the Temple dispersed over the Mount of Olives, under the sycamore trees along the Kedron—in fact, anywhere to find shelter from the intense heat; and, seating themselves on the grass, prepared the provisions they had brought with them. The richest had erected tents, surmounted with flags and banners, giving an elegant and picturesque appearance to the scene.

When Rebekah and Zipporah had traversed the length of the valley, they soon reached the 'Water Gate,' passed the bridge joining the Temple to 'Mount Zion,' and followed the narrow ravine which crossed the city. Leaving behind the 'Fountain of Gihon,' the 'King's House,' and the 'Middle Gate,' they re-entered Jerusalem by the 'Gate of Zion,' thus finding themselves in the quarter called the 'City of David,' opposite a large house surrounded

by a high wall. The gates were open : some servants distributed with great ostentation alms to a multitude of beggars and sick persons, whilst along the court were placed tables, where people of the same class were eating. From the blessings showered on their benefactor, Zipporah heard that this house belonged to the Pharisee Oreb, who thus gave his alms in public, in order to elicit the people's thanks. She experienced more repugnance than surprise in seeing herself obliged to follow her step-mother into this house.

The two side-pieces of the door were covered with a profusion of sacred sentences ; but this external show of religion agreed very little with the joyous accents heard from the apartments. Whatever might have been Zipporah's surprise at hearing this noise, which became louder and louder as she went farther into the house, it became still greater when, at the entrance of a large room, she noticed a numerous company of Pharisees and women sitting around a table sumptuously laid out, and displaying a rich repast. The unexpected arrival of Eleazar's wife immediately produced silence. The men assumed a grave air, an austere and mortified appearance, looking at each other sideways, as though to inquire

the meaning of this sudden arrival : the women, on the contrary, seemed to enjoy the evident confusion of their companions, and laughed in an underhand manner.

‘You are welcome,’ said Oreb, going to meet Rebekah and her daughter, and trying to conceal his vexation, and recover his aspect of holiness, or rather of hypocrisy. ‘We have repeated our phylacterical sentences from daybreak to sunrise ; we have worshipped the Lord in His holy Temple, and have offered Him the first-fruits of the productions of our gardens—mint, cinnamon, anise, and the finest wheat ; we have distributed alms to the poor, given to eat to him who was hungry, drink to him who was thirsty ; we have purified ourselves three times, and, now that the day is ended, we give ourselves up to innocent mirth, as it is right and proper for every good Israelite to do on so solemn a day. The presence of the pious and worthy spouse of the deputy high priest is an honour to us ; and we dare hope that she, as well as the beautiful Zipporah, will deign to partake of our simple repast.’

‘We have not come to share with you in your simple repast,’ replied Rebekah, laying great stress on the last word but one, and looking with a

malicious smile at the delicacies of all sorts on the table ; ‘ we have taken our refreshment. But I am anxious to talk with you about a somewhat important matter, and I hope you will excuse my coming without having been invited.’

‘ The spouse of the deputy high priest,’ said Oreb, with a flattering and servile tone and manner, ‘ need never excuse herself ; she ought always to be the more graciously received, as the honour of a visit from her was totally unexpected. Shall I follow you into my oratory ?’

Rebekah signified that she was willing, and all three left the dining-room, amid the amused whisperings of the women. Zipporah blushed, and as soon as she was in the courtyard, where her mother told her to wait, she burst into tears. Really, until then, she had never been in such society. She had been to Court, and she was aware that her father had only taken her there from the best motives,—motives which he was obliged to consider as binding ; but why should her stepmother let her witness the debauchery of vile hypocrites, of women free from all modesty ? ‘ If they expect to overcome my repugnance for Oreb,’ said the innocent young maiden to herself, ‘ they are quite mistaken. Notwithstand-

ing the respect I owe my father's wife, I will rather obey my father himself, my conscience, and my God, than an imprudent stepmother.' Whilst Zipporah was thus communing with herself, and imploring of Heaven to help her, she saw the Pharisee approach, but Rebekah was not with him.

'Your stepmother,' said Oreb, 'has allowed me to present myself before you to beg your pardon for the somewhat harsh words that escaped me yesterday.'

'If you can forgive yourself, I willingly forgive you,' replied Zipporah with coldness; and she wished to withdraw.

'Flee me not thus, for very soon you will be beyond the seas, and I shall then find it impossible to see you, to hear you. I wish to obtain your promise of listening to me more favourably when you return to us.'

'I have already given you my answer in a formal refusal, and it is irrevocable.'

'How noble and amiable you are !' replied Oreb ; and taking Zipporah's hand, he wished to kiss it, but the young Jewish maiden drew it away at once, and retired, as though touched by a serpent.

'Go away !' said she ; 'your presence is perfectly

unbearable to me. Return to your company ; it is worthy of you.'

In spite of her patience and natural mildness, she was not wanting in firmness ; when occasion required, she could display both resolution and energy. The Pharisee, somewhat disconcerted, drew back a step, his lips pale and trembling, and his features agitated by anger, which he vainly tried to conceal.

'Beautiful Zipporah,' cried he, in a voice of mildness, but proving that his heart was full of violent hatred, 'you are unjust towards me ; perhaps you will repent of it one day.'

The dark, sinister expression of his face changed suddenly when he saw Rebekah come into the court.

'My efforts have been fruitless,' said he, resuming his flattering mien ; 'the daughter does not share the mother's sweet spirit ; she has rejected my offers with disdain.'

'Be not discouraged, my good Oreb,' replied Rebekah. 'This thoughtless girl is still young ; when reason comes to her, she will the better feel how improper it is to offend a chief of the Pharisees.'

'I hope so for myself, and still more for her,' responded Oreb ; and so saying, his lips contracted

into a smile, that would certainly have alarmed Zipporah if she had been looking at him.

He retired, and the two women left the house.

‘Have I not already told you a hundred times,’ said Rebekah to her stepdaughter on their way home, ‘that if you cannot love this man, you may at least love his power?’

‘You would wish me, then, to condemn myself to eternal unhappiness, by taking such a man as this for my husband?’

‘These are big words without any meaning. You do not know how useful you may be in advancing your family by getting over your repugnance for the powerful Oreb.’

‘Is not our family high enough already?’

‘No; not as long as there is any one above us.’

Zipporah made no reply; she saw her stepmother wedded to hopes so ambitious as to appear almost insane, and she feared to irritate her by speaking any longer on the subject. At her return to her father’s house, she found a woman sent by Paulina to tell her she felt much better than on the preceding evening.

This good news, which the maiden had been anxious to hear, relieved her heart a little; and


that night she slept in the sweet hope that her approaching journey would free her, at least for some time, from the importunity, or maybe the vengeance, of the hateful Oreb.





CHAPTER VIII.

A WALK IN JERUSALEM.

OME, my daughter,' said Eleazar, on his return from the Temple the next morning, 'I will put on my sandals, and we will take a walk in the city.'

Zipporah was delighted, and hastened to get ready. Each moment their progress was stopped by old people, cripples and beggars, who had placed themselves on the frequented part of the road to implore alms. Eleazar gave them abundant relief, and then said to his daughter: 'I am sorry for these unfortunate creatures; but I do not like the Chaldean phrases which they still make use of, and which recall so strongly the sorrows of Israel in her captivity. Alas! we have not yet purified our noble language from these sad remains,

and already it is becoming corrupt again by our mixture with the Greeks and Romans. What will this beautiful language become — this language which has always distinguished our people, and which God Himself has consecrated, when He deigned to reveal His will to our holy lawgiver?'

Passing near Paulina's dwelling, Zipporah asked her father to go in for a minute with her.

'Very willingly, my child,' said Eleazar. 'Our friend has merited by her piety, as sincere as it is ardent, all the rights that the daughters of Jerusalem have to share in our regard. She is sick; this is a new motive for us to show our interest in her.'

When they went in, they found Paulina walking with slow steps in the courtyard. As soon as she saw the deputy high priest, she came to meet him. 'The Lord be with you,' said Eleazar, 'and may the prayers offered up to Him in His holy Temple bring you happiness!'

'It was my wish to take part in the act of thanksgiving, rabbi, but God had not so willed it.'

(Rabbi means master, lord; it is this title that the apostles afterwards used in addressing Jesus Christ.)

‘Those that you have offered Him from your bed of suffering have not been less acceptable to Him; they have given you patience, this virtue which is so uncommon with men.’

Zipporah embraced her friend; and the conversation very soon passed from the feast, which was the subject in all minds at this particular time, to the voyage that Zipporah and Eleazar were so soon to undertake. As Eleazar knew no more than his daughter about the land they were on the point of visiting, he asked for all the information he thought might be useful to them, and Paulina hastened to tell them all they wished.

They then mentioned the threats that Oreb had used to Zipporah, and of which she had given a faithful account to her father.

‘I know not if I am mistaken,’ said Paulina, ‘but when I see these proud Pharisees, I think I see again the priests of certain temples at Rome. The hypocrisy of the latter disgusted me; that of the Pharisees appears to me still more frightful, because in honouring the only and true God, or rather in pretending to honour Him, they can only give simple and innocent minds false and unworthy notions of the divine perfections.’

‘You are quite right,’ replied Eleazar. ‘There are some faults into which men may be drawn by their unbridled passions; the hypocrite, however, always acts with composure. Instead of holiness being his end, it is merely the means to an end—generally a sinful end, that of having the power to satisfy his vile wishes with the greater safety. Every day we complain of the evils that the people of Israel suffer under the yoke of barbarous nations. Alas! Heaven chastises us for the sins of these men, who ought to be the guardians of the law, and who instead only use it as a cloak to hide their vileness. But let us still continue to hope. The day is not far off when the reign of iniquity will give place to that of righteousness. “The Redeemer will come to Zion,” saith the prophet Isaiah; “He will come unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,” saith the Lord. “As for me, this is my covenant with them,” saith the Lord! “My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed,” saith the Lord, “from henceforth and for ever!”’

‘Amen,’ replied both Zipporah and her friend

Paulina, raising their eyes to heaven, in which shone hope and love. They then said farewell, after having agreed to see as much of each other as they could during the few days Eleazar would still pass in Jerusalem. Zipporah took her father's arm, and they returned home, just at the moment that a messenger arrived from Antigonos, asking Eleazar to go to the palace.

When the Jewish maiden found herself alone, she retired to her room, closed the door, and prayed. She had noticed for some days the evident dislike her father felt for accepting the mission offered him by the King, but he had above all plainly shown this dislike during his conversation with Paulina. Whilst her imagination pictured a thousand vague and confused fears, Rebekah suddenly made her appearance.





CHAPTER IX.

THE EMBASSY.

WHEN Antigonus had decided on trying to secure Antony's goodwill, he had been at first somewhat puzzled as to what sort of bribery he ought to use. When bargaining with the Parthians for the crown of Judea, he had been obliged to pay them a considerable sum of money, as well as to deliver up to them five hundred Jewish maidens. Such tribute would find no favour in the eyes of the Triumvir, who had plenty of slaves, and who probably might fear that the money might never reach him, on account of the numerous factions inimical to the one of which he was master.

The three Triumvirs were Marc Antony, Lepidus,

and Octavius, afterwards the first Roman Emperor, under the name of Augustus Cæsar. But the Roman general was a passionate admirer of rare and precious jewels, and the splendid gifts of this species that he had made the preceding winter to the Queen of Egypt, the famous Cleopatra, had caused great sensation throughout the Roman world. So Antigonus flattered himself that he could offer Antony nothing more likely to gain his protection than a collection of precious stones, which, besides, would possess the great advantage of easy concealment, so as to escape every danger in the transit.

At all times, the Jews had had an extensive trade in precious stones, imported from Arabia and the shores of the Red Sea, and they excelled in the art of engraving and cutting them. The Maccabees, the first to wear the diadem, possessed family jewels of immense value ; so Antigonus decided to sacrifice a part of them to gain his own ends. He even had some of the richest stones removed from the royal crown, saying to himself, that if he failed in his enterprise he should no longer require them, and if he succeeded he could easily replace them.

The name of '*Maccabee*' comes from the initials

of a passage in the law, '*Mi Camo-Ca Baalim Jehovah*,' signifying, 'Who among the gods is like unto Thee, Jehovah?' and was chosen as the motto for his standard by Judas, one of the Asmonean family.

The only thing now to be done in the matter was to find some suitable and competent person to select other stones from the lapidaries of Jerusalem, to complete the present he designed making ; and Eleazar recommended one of his relations, named Zechariah, who had for a long time been a jeweller by profession, and who had learned the Roman language, owing to his various transactions with different merchants. He was, besides, a just, loyal, and pleasant man, notwithstanding the loss of his only daughter, and the misfortunes he had suffered in his trade.

Eight days had passed by since the great festival of Pentecost, when Eleazar, urged by the King to leave Jerusalem without further delay, announced to his daughter his intention of going on the morrow.

Zipporah went to bid Paulina 'farewell.' The widow shed many tears at parting from her young friend. She embraced her affectionately, pressed

her to her heart, as though she feared her being torn from her.

‘My dear Zipporah,’ said she, ‘do not alarm yourself. A presentiment assures me that great dangers await you in Rome—may I be mistaken ! Perhaps I ought to have concealed my fears and tears from you ; but I know that your confidence in the Lord’s protection will ever be above whatever sorrow may overtake you ; and if I tell you the secrets of my heart, it is only that you may be on your guard against the allurements of a corrupt city—that you may have faith in the Almighty, who will save you from harm even in the midst of this great Babylon of iniquity.’

Zipporah was too much overcome to be able to reply. Her head rested on Paulina’s shoulder, where she gave free vent to her tears, remaining quiet and speechless. The pallor of death covered her countenance, and an involuntary shivering took possession of her limbs. Paulina was the first to break this mournful silence. Making an effort to subdue her emotion, she took her friend’s hand, saying to her :

‘My good Zipporah, your father expects you ; go where God’s will calls you. May the Lord go

with you ! may His holy angel bring you back to my arms, as he brought back young Tobias to the arms of his father !'

'Pray for me, Paulina.' This was all the young maiden could manage to say ; and after having kissed her friend once more, she left her.

When Eleazar saw her come back in tears, he did not try to comfort her, for he himself was very much agitated, without being able to explain the reason of his fears. He called Zechariah, and told Jehoiakim to bring the mules.

Jehoiakim was one of the porters of the Temple, as well as Eleazar's confidential man. Although of a grave and peaceable aspect, he was very courageous and trustworthy ; he was well armed, and so was Zechariah. As to Eleazar, he never carried anything but a stick, as he thought it unsuitable to his character and sacred profession to carry defensive arms.

Besides the four mules to carry the travellers, there was another, which Jehoiakim led by the bridle, loaded with luggage and provisions for their journey.

Having crossed the valley or ravine encompassing the city, Eleazar stopped his mule and turned towards the Mount of Olives. The groups of olive

trees growing on the sides and at the bottom of the mountain, only partially lighted by the burning rays of a Syrian sun, made a striking contrast with the black masses of sterile rocks scattered over the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and the still darker openings of the caves forming the places of sepulture of the prophets. Very far off to the south-east, the view was bounded by the rocky mountains of Arabia, while the rank waters of the Dead Sea lay stretched out, covered by a pale and monotonous light.

Turning away his eyes from a scene he had long contemplated with a pensive air, Eleazar said to his companions: 'It is sweet and consoling, after having looked at the lake which contains in its bosom Sodom and Gomorrah, to see Jerusalem before us, with its palaces, its towers, its gardens, and above all, its glorious and magnificent Temple; but it is likewise very painful to leave it.'

And turning the head of his beast of burden towards the west, he continued his road, plunged in the deepest silence. His companions had shared his admiration; the heart of each was ready to break with grief at quitting the Holy City.

Leaving the magnificent grotto of Jeremiah on the right, they went to the north of the coast of

Shechem and Beth-horon, crossing the only plain to be found in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Fields of cummin or anise, over which hovered flocks of pigeons or swarms of bees, surrounded our travellers on all sides ; but very soon the road became narrowed between the hedges of nopals and tamarinds, and the refreshing shade of these trees induced them to make a fresh halt.

Going away from this road, and before descending into the valley, Eleazar turned once again, to take a last view of Jerusalem. He was under the shadow of some old cedars, which, according to tradition, had been planted by King Solomon, and formed a solemn and majestic avenue. Jerusalem now presented to the sight nothing but a confused mass of white edifices, encircled by a green girdle of hills, though one might distinguish the towers on the walls, the Temple, and even the column of smoke issuing from the altar.

‘What city in the world can be compared to the Holy City?’ Eleazar exclaimed, after a moment’s silent contemplation. ‘Jerusalem was more ancient than Rome is to-day before Romulus had assembled his hordes of brigands, and placed a single stone on the banks of the Tiber. But it is not by its

antiquity alone that it merits our respect. All other cities are the abode of idolatry ; ours is the sanctuary of the only true God, of the religion He has graciously revealed to us ; ours contains the only palace of the Lord,—the palace in which He descended visibly, whence He made His voice to be heard coming out of a cloud ; and all the rocks around it are consecrated by the bones of prophets and of sacred writers who are buried there. O Jerusalem ! what will thy glory be when thou seest this Child spoken of by the prophet Isaiah : “ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever ! ” ’

Saying these words, Eleazar kissed his hand in sign of homage, his eyes still turned towards the Holy City ; then continuing his road, he began to descend the valley.

Zipporah had not expressed all she was feeling,

but she was quite as much overcome as her father. She constantly turned her look towards the abode of her childhood ; when it had disappeared from her sight, her heart was bursting at the remembrance of Sihor's prophecies and the words spoken to her by Paulina. She went on for some time in silence, without paying any attention to her companions, and entirely absorbed in her sorrowful reflections.





CHAPTER X.

THE JOURNEY.

THE travellers were drawing near Beth-horon by a side road, following such a narrow ravine that two horsemen could scarcely march abreast. The rocks bordering it on both sides were of a dark red, offering here and there carpets of lovely moss, where the wild goat loved to skip. Eleazar reminded his daughter that it was in this narrow defile that the Lord had caused large stones to fall from heaven upon the Amorites, after their defeat by Joshua; and these stones had killed a far greater number than the swords of the Israelites.

On arriving at Beth-horon, the travellers entered the only hostelry this town contained; but it was

so crowded with people that it was quite impossible to find any room.

As they had brought with them all the provisions requisite for their short journey,—for the port of Joppa, whither they intended going, was only about forty miles from Jerusalem,—they crossed the town, to find a shady place in the country where they might take some necessary refreshment. They came near the foot of a small rock, whence gushed a limpid spring, covered by a large fig-tree. Glad of this delicious shade, they got off their mules, watered them, and let them graze at liberty, while Jehoiakim placed their food on the grass near them.

Eleazar sat near his daughter, and could not withdraw his gaze from the charming landscape stretched out before them towards Shechem, and which resembled a large garden.

They then descended a narrow valley, where gurgled a little brook, its borders lined with white and yellow lilies. Eleazar approached it, got off his mule, and said to Zipporah :

‘Let us rest a moment under the shadow of this sycamore. We are in the Valley of Elah ; this is the brook whence the young shepherd David fetched his pebbles to kill Goliath. Men, generations, king-

doms pass away, but how little nature changes! These waters flow as in the time of David, and their bed is still filled with the pebbles, similar to those found by David.'

'And it is from the top of the mountain we have just descended that the acclamations of Judah and Israel arose,' said Zipporah, 'when David, pressing with his foot on the body of his overthrown enemy, cut off his head with his own sword. We have followed in the steps of the Israelites, who then pursued the Philistines as far as the town of Ekron. But sweeter sounds have been heard in this Valley of Elah; for it is said that it was here that David composed one of his most beautiful psalms of thanksgiving to the Lord, in memory of this miraculous triumph over his mighty enemy, Goliath of Gath.'

Eleazar asked for his psalter, and when Jehoiakim had given it to him, he turned to the psalm, and read some of the expressive and appropriate verses.

'We have with us,' said Eleazar, 'neither psaltery nor a ten-stringed instrument, but our voices will suffice. Sing us, my daughter, the beautiful psalm composed by the young shepherd.'

'The echoes of the mountains, witnesses of his

deed of valour, will be a far more harmonious accompaniment than all the harps and musical instruments constructed by the hand of man,' said Zechariah.

Zipporah had always displayed natural taste and fondness for music, which may justly be styled the chief enjoyment of the Jewish people. The psaltery was her favourite musical instrument—one eminently suited, by its grave, deep tones, to the service of God. She often sang to it in a sweet and tender voice; and her father delighted to accompany her, as he possessed quite as much taste for music as his daughter.

But Jehoiakim managed to get out her instrument; so Zipporah took her psaltery, gave one look at the psalm mentioned by Eleazar, raised her eyes to heaven, and sang with so much expression and deep feeling, that her father, who had joined with her for some time in a sort of undertone, left off to listen. Never had he heard her sing with more energy and pathos, the echoes repeating all the verses, as though they wished to share in the devotion of her who had come to disturb their wonted repose.

Eleazar, letting fall his hands, which he had kept



Zipperah took her psaltery and raised her eyes to heaven.

raised towards heaven, said: 'It is thus, my child, that we are able to embody our recollections. The figures that have hitherto only been traced in our mind by obscure features, receive life when we remember them on the very spot where our native country and our faith have gained such glorious triumphs.'

No true Hebrew was ever yet insensible to the united action of religion, patriotism, and music; and its influence was perhaps never more felt than at this moment. Zipporah's beautiful eyes were still raised towards heaven; and Jehoiakim, with open mouth, continued to look at her, as though expecting her to go on with her melodious song of praise.

Zipporah's sweet voice had recalled to Zechariah that of his only and cherished daughter, taken from him by death, and whose accents had been quite as enchanting. He fell into a mournful reverie; his eyes, which he had accidentally fixed on the brook, gradually became dim, and tears fell freely down his cheeks and beard. At length, recovering from his despondency, he seized his mule's reins, and, either to hide his emotion, or to call off attention from himself, he cried out to Eleazar, 'Well, Rabbi Eleazar, why are you so thoughtful? Do you

forget that we have still some way to travel before night sets in ?'

And having wiped the perspiration from his forehead, he mounted, and going on, made a sign to his companions to follow. The sun was setting as they drew near Ramah, and the town was already half hidden in the shadow of the rock overlooking the height on which it was raised ; but the large palm-trees covering the rock were reflected on a sky of glorious purple, and shook their fan-like branches at the sun, as though they would have felt proud of enjoying the light, of which they were deprived by the proximity of several houses.

Unfortunately for Eleazar and his party, at Ramah, as at Beth-horon, there was but a single inn ; and in this inn was not a corner to be found without some traveller returning from the Feast of Pentecost having taken possession of it. So Eleazar thought their only chance was to go on at once to another place, called 'Solomon's Well,' where there was a large hostelry, in which they might find lodging for the night. They set off again, but very slowly, to spare the mules. They were still surrounded by mountains ; but these possessed a still more pronounced character of sterility and grandeur.

No dwelling of any description relieved the solitude of this district, over which the sun cast masses of shadow darker and darker. The last rays of the sun, whose disc had entirely disappeared, still gilded the summits of the mountains with so bright a glare, that they might have been taken for volcanoes. Very soon these heights faded one by one into darkness, and night reigned undisturbed over the desert. Whilst the travellers advanced slowly, Zechariah, who had gone forward, came back to meet them, bringing the agreeable news that they could find commodious and comfortable lodgings in the hostelry. As to provisions, he told them they could only reckon on what they had brought with them, as the hostelry had nothing further to offer than rooms, and the water from a neighbouring well.

It was with great pleasure that Eleazar and his daughter passed under the massive gateway of the hostelry; and as they had all the appearance of being persons of distinction, they were conducted into the principal apartment, to which they ascended by three or four steps made of rough stones, laid one upon another without mortar.



CHAPTER XI.

THE BLACK SHADOW.

THE inn to which we have introduced our reader was a large, square edifice with a single floor, forming four sides of a large courtyard, in the midst of which stood a *piscina* or basin, to enable any persons who stopped there to purify themselves. Camels and mules were dispersed all over the court, some asleep, others eating their provender.

When Eleazar and his party entered the room reserved for travellers of distinction, they found several guests already there, who addressed them in the usual way, 'The Lord be with you!' To which they made answer, 'The Lord bless you;' and the conversation, which had been momentarily interrupted by their arrival, was resumed without

constraint. It turned chiefly on the death of Phasaël, Herod's brother, who had been arrested by order of Antigonus, and placed in a dungeon, where he had dashed his head against the walls. Next they spoke of Marc Antony's designs, and the probable plans of Herod the Tetrarch, whose flight into Italy caused much sensation. Then they passed on to a subject which appeared to have greatly excited the curiosity of the travellers ; this was to make out who the stranger could possibly be who had entered the room a few moments before, and had only remained a very short time, but whose countenance, as dark as the garments he wore, had attracted all the more attention as he had kept himself quite apart, taking no share in the conversation.

As Zipporah was little accustomed to the fatigue of a whole day's journey, she expressed a wish to retire as soon as they had finished their supper, and her father went with her to see the chamber allotted to her. On their way they noticed, by the light of the lamp in the courtyard, several persons speaking to each other in an undertone. However, Eleazar did not pay much attention to them, as, holding Zipporah by the hand, he continued his way as far

as the room where she was to pass the night. Having assured himself that the door fastened on the inside, he embraced his daughter tenderly, bade her good-night, and returned to Zechariah.

As soon as her father had left her, Zipporah pushed the bolts of the door, sat down, and looked carefully round her apartment, which was only lighted by the moon, whose light came in by a small window, opening over the court, and above the door. The solitude and sadness, joined to the fatigue she was feeling, made her extremely low-spirited. This was the first occasion she had left the paternal roof—at any time a terrible trial to a sensitive mind; and this trial became doubly painful to Zipporah, for she not only was quitting her native country, but was about to cross the Great Sea, and find herself among barbarians and idolaters.

However, she prayed and got into bed; but the depression which, in spite of all her efforts, had taken possession of her spirit, and the wretched pallet on which she was lying, for a long time chased away sleep from her eyelids. At length, fatigue overpowered anxiety, and she slept heavily. She had been asleep for some hours, when she was awoke by a singular noise at her door; but fearing

that her father, in coming to her, might fall into the same danger as threatened herself, she was silent, and, scarcely breathing, listened attentively. Very soon she heard more distinct sounds.

‘Woe! woe to the daughter of Jerusalem who leaves the Holy Temple to take part in the abominations of the heathen! Woe to her if she will not return at once to the Holy City!’ These words, uttered in a distinct though hollow voice, struck the young Jewish maiden with astonishment: she imagined she heard the voice of the angel entrusted with curses from heaven. Trembling like an aspen leaf, her brow covered with cold perspiration, she remained in bed.

Meantime, she listened with that degree of agonizing attention that often any one placed in great danger is capable of, when a cry, which this time had nothing at all supernatural in it, re-echoed in the courtyard: ‘The Black Shadow! The Black Shadow!’

This cry seemed to bring back Zipporah to life. She then rose on her bed, and heard the noise of several persons fleeing across the court.

Recovering her spirits, she immediately got off her wretched pallet, although her limbs still

trembled violently, and, placing a seat near the door, got up on it to try and see her deliverer, for she no longer doubted that she had been saved from a very great danger by the interference of Sihor. In reality, she saw him coming slowly towards the direction of her room. She got down from her elevated position, and hastened to unfasten the door, with the same confidence she would have shown to a messenger sent from heaven.

‘Cease to fear, my child,’ said the mysterious prophet; ‘thy enemies will have no power over thee as long as thou puttest thy trust in God. Greater dangers await thee beyond the seas. In order to overreach thee, thy filial piety will be tampered with; but thou wilt meet with a deliverer among those who know not the true God, and Heaven will make use of a daughter of Babylon to save a daughter of Israel. May the words of the sweet Psalmist in speaking to the Lord be ever in thy heart and in thy mouth! “But mine eyes are unto Thee, O God the Lord: in Thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.”’

Scarcely had he uttered these words than he left her, and disappeared in the darkness. At the same moment Elcazar, Zechariah, and Jehoiakim, with

several travellers, arrived, having been disturbed from their sleep by the extraordinary noise.

‘Oh, my father,’ said the young girl, rushing into her father’s arms, ‘they are all gone ; Sihor has sent them away !’

‘Who, who, my child ?’ inquired Eleazar, looking at Zipporah in such a way as plainly showed all his paternal anxiety.

But Zipporah could not inform him ; she could only tell him that some men, who doubtless had bad intentions, had come to threaten her, but that Sihor’s presence had obliged them to go away.

Eleazar remained for a long time both speechless and wrapt in deep thought. From the motion of his lips, the agitation of his features, any one could see that his mind was much pre-occupied ; at length, passing his hand across his brow, as though to chase away all painful thoughts, he said to Zipporah :

‘My child, let us return thanks to the Lord. He hath overthrown the projects of our enemies, and confounded their sinful desires. May Heaven grant that my suspicions be not well founded ! It is hard to find only hatred where we expect to find friends !’

Zipporah did not ask what her father's suspicions might be, and her heart was too full of charity even to guess them. She embraced Eleazar, and followed him into the room he was occupying, to pass the remainder of this troubled night there.

Whilst the father and daughter were giving utterance to the overflowing of their hearts, and thankfulness to Heaven, Zechariah and Jehoiakim, followed by the other travellers, searched all about the inn and its neighbourhood for those who had caused such disturbance; but their quest was a fruitless one. Sihor, too, had left the inn; but from what Zipporah had said, they thought that the stranger who had stopped some time in the room, without speaking a syllable to any one, must be the 'Black Shadow.'

Now the day began to dawn; and Eleazar's wish was to arrive at Joppa before the heat of noon, so he gave the signal of departure. They soon had their early repast, Jehoiakim saddled the mules, and they went on their way.

When our travellers had arrived at the extremity of the mountainous country they had so lately traversed, they saw before them the celebrated Plain of Sharon in all its beauty, covered with flocks,

cultivated fields, magnificent gardens, whence the morning breeze wafted the sweetest perfumes. The whole of one side, from Gaza to Mount Carmel, of this delicious country, was full of numerous groves of palm and olive trees, with several villages in their shadow. In the spring, the entire fields had been covered with pinks, tulips, lilies, and the beautiful roses which make this soil so renowned. In the Canticles of Solomon, our Blessed Saviour is called 'the Rose of Sharon.' But the summer heat had only left dry and withered stalks in their place, and in such great abundance, that the inhabitants tied them up into bundles to heat their hearth-stones. When our travellers entered the territory of Joppa (now Jaffa; the French took it in 1799), the celebrity that this place had acquired by the excellence of its fruit appeared to them well merited, for the road passed through a continuation of gardens, offering the most beautiful fruit-trees to the sight, and ornamented with fountains and ponds.

But however attractive this sight might be, Elcazar and his companions paid little regard to it, for they had been told that from the top of the hills near the town they might sometimes get

a view of Jerusalem ; and in the hope of enjoying a spectacle which interested them vastly more than the most extensive or most beautiful landscape in the whole world, they climbed in spite of the heat the highest mountain in that part. Their expectation was in vain ; when they had reached the summit, they found the atmosphere too charged with vapour to enable them to have the promised pleasure, and they came down much grieved at this unexpected disappointment. The perpetual motion around, as soon as they entered the precincts of populous Joppa, dispelled their grief ; and Zipporah herself, when she saw such a number of foreigners, dressed in their national costumes, and thronging the streets, took great interest in a panorama so new and amusing to her. Passing in the midst of a population which seemed to increase as fast as they advanced, our travellers arrived at the fortifications ; then, under a long vaulted gateway, entering at length the town of Joppa itself, which claims the honour of being built on the identical spot where Noah entered the ark, and is likewise famous as the place of this good man's sepulture.



CHAPTER XII.

THE PASSAGE.

WHEN Eleazar and his companions had refreshed themselves by the bath and food they had taken on arriving at the inn, they walked down to the sea-shore to look at it nearer, for they had only caught a glimpse of it from the top of the mountains.

Turning down the hill leading to the port, they very soon found themselves in the midst of the workmen, who, aided by elephants and machines, dragged and put in their places enormous blocks of stone, destined to enlarge the mole or pier, the ruins of which still remain. The port was full of ships of all sorts. Those destined for trade were easily recognised by their size ; the prows of the smallest, beautifully decorated and sculptured,

showed that they belonged to the rich and powerful. Brilliant flags floated from the masts, whose gay colours were reflected in long trails over the limpid waters.

As Zipporah was tired with the noise of the machines and the sharp cries of the elephants, often mixed up with the oaths of their leaders, she asked her father to walk along the sea-shore, that, being away from the habitations of men, she might contemplate at her leisure all the grandeur and magnificence of this sea, whose extent recalled so forcibly the immensity of God, and look forward to the Messiah, whose dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Almost as deeply affected as his daughter, Eleazar walked beside her, his right hand passed through the folds of his cloak, the left holding his long beard, his eyes fixed on the changing surface of the waters.

In order that Zipporah might entirely recover from the fatigue of her journey before exposing herself to a long voyage, Eleazar determined to spend an entire day at Joppa. Two days after, our travellers embarked in a ship belonging to a merchant, a friend of the worthy Zechariah, which

was sailing direct to Italy. When Zipporah contemplated from the top of the prow the shores of her native country, which she was quitting without knowing when she would see it again, the regret she felt was all the more intensified by the beauty of the surrounding scene. The azure of the firmament was intersected by clouds tinged with the richest shades, throwing over the surface of the waters bands of shade and light which extended as far as the last limits of the horizon. When they rested on their oars for a moment, they saw reflected on the sea the most charming landscapes of the surrounding shore, or of ships leaving the port—now sparkling under the rays of the sun, now being hidden in the shade, according to the side they were going.

‘The inhabitants of Joppa,’ said Eleazar, ‘prove abundantly that they belong to the tribe of Zebulun, to whom it was foretold: “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for an haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon;” and again: “He shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.”’

‘And this prophecy is fulfilled to the very letter,’ added Zechariah, ‘for they have become rich not

only by fishing and trade, but also by their manufacture of glass, of which sand is the chief material.'

'To what nations do these vessels belong coming in the same direction with ours?' asked Eleazar of his relation, who had lived some time at Alexandria, and so easily recognised ships belonging to any country.

'The first one,' replied Zechariah, 'with the crocodile and the figure of Serapis on its prow, evidently belongs to the Egyptians: the second is a Roman ship; it bears the twins Castor and Pollux, and its rowers wear no beard on their chin. The one following that is manned by Athenians, as may be seen by the owl painted on its sails, and the figure of Minerva, their tutelary divinity, at its prow.'

'But what is that ship yonder, ploughing the waves so majestically, and with such rapidity that it will soon leave us behind?'

'The number and the beauty of its gilded oars announce it a king of the sea; but we must wait until it is nearer, that I may be able to say with certainty to what nation it belongs.'

This vessel soon drew near, and many astonished eyes were fixed on it. Its prow was sculptured in the shape of a swan; its purple sails fell the length

of the masts, which, as well as the principal part of the building, were ornamented with painting and gilding; and the oars, the lower part of which seemed cased in ivory, had the handles gilt as far as the part that touched the water. Under a splendid canopy, a youth, gorgeously dressed and listlessly extended on cushions, held in one hand a golden goblet filled with wine; behind him might be seen a number of musicians, who sought to distract his thoughts from the tediousness of the voyage by the sweet strains of their instruments whenever the rowers rested on their oars; and a large casket, in which burned the purest incense, was placed at a short distance, so that the breeze wafted the embalmed smoke towards him.

‘I recognise him now,’ said Zechariah, turning to Eleazar; ‘it is Heliodorus, a young merchant of Tyre, whose father’s death has brought him an immense fortune. He has embraced the opinions of the heathen sect of the Epicureans, so he spends all his riches in procuring every enjoyment and luxury. He ought to have some associates near him, to indemnify him with pleasures for the short duration his life will probably have.’

‘Unfortunate! who never thinks of that God

who will call him to render up a severe account of the use he has made of his wealth! And this statue that I see on the stern of the ship, seated on an ivory throne?’

‘That is the Venus of the seas, the daughter of Assyria, to whom, doubtless, this wretched man offers his homage and addresses his prayers.’

‘The fool!’ cried Eleazar with holy zeal; ‘is it thus that he expresses to Heaven his gratitude for the benefits he has received? How is it that the waves do not open to swallow up these impious passengers, who know that a simple plank separates them from death, and who dare count on the protection of an ivory statue of an unchaste goddess?’

‘Calm yourself, Rabbi Eleazar,’ said Zechariah; ‘you must accustom yourself to see such things without expressing your horror so openly, if you do not wish to fail in your mission, and compromise, perhaps, not only the good of your native country, but also your daughter’s safety.’

However, this excellent advice did not make him any quieter, and his wrath only increased when, the rowers of the Tyrian vessel having finished their manœuvres, the noise of musical instruments resounded with sweet harmony across the waters.

‘Jehoiakim! Jehoiakim!’ cried Eleazar, ‘give me at once the sacred volume; since I am obliged to hear their accursed flutes, I will force them to hear me announce the ruin and desolation of their native country, and the judgments pronounced by God upon their proud and idolatrous city.’

Taking the volume from Jehoiakim, he began to declaim, in a deep, sonorous voice, the 27th chapter of the prophet Ezekiel. His imposing tone, his animated gestures, whilst he repeated the solemn and terrible words of the prophet, offered a strange contrast to the melody of the instruments on board this magnificent vessel; but the youthful Heliodorus seemed to pay no attention to it. However, as the music ceased, he just raised his head for a moment, and the voice of the pious Eleazar re-echoed across the waves, repeating the end of the terrible prophecy:

“And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas

in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise, and all thy company in the midst of thee, shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee ; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more. ”’

At that very time the prophecy was beginning to be fulfilled. Although Tyre still reckoned many rich and opulent men among its inhabitants, it had lost a great part of its commerce,—this incalculable source of riches, uniting India to Europe, which had either been discovered or augmented by Solomon when trafficking with Tarshish and Ophir, which had successively enriched Bagdad and Palmyra, as well as the ports of Sidon and Alexandria, and which would at a later epoch make a powerful state of the small republic of Venice.

Eleazar had scarcely rolled up his parchments before the rowers of the Tyrian vessel, who, as well as their master, had listened attentively, resumed their oars. The vessel very soon disappeared from the sight of the Hebrews, and calm being restored to Eleazar’s spirit, he began to discourse on the novel objects around him.

The sea was covered with numbers of small ships, which were gradually lost to view as the shades of evening drew on. When the crimson disc of the sun had descended majestically into the waters, our travellers could not see a single ship, and Eleazar and his daughter, for the first time in their lives, found themselves surrounded on all sides by the glorious canopy of heaven, as though they were the only beings in the world they were going over.

The remainder of their sea-voyage passed without any remarkable incident happening, and at last they arrived at the height of Brundusium, now Brindisi, in Calabria, a port where travellers coming from the Levant generally landed, and whence it was easy for our travellers to go to Rome by the Appian Road, the direct road to that city.

After they had entered the outer port, full of vessels presenting an extraordinary display of war-like preparations, Eleazar and Zipporah, with their companions, entered a boat, and soon trod the soil of Italy.



CHAPTER XIII.

BRUNDUSIUM.

AS Zechariah had passed through Brundusium twice before, he now conducted his fellow-travellers to a good hostelry near the quay, at a short distance from the place where they had landed.

Whilst they were sitting near the door, looking at the crowd passing near the port, and the ships lying at anchor, they saw a detachment of soldiers pass by, headed by a young man in armour, mounted on a richly caparisoned charger. Eleazar trembled, for he recognised in the rider Herod the Tetrarch, as he was designated by the partisans of his rival Antigonus, although he had assumed the title of King of Judea ever since the decree pronounced by the Senate.

However, Eleazar was not actuated by any personal hatred; for at this epoch, Herod, whose name is inseparably connected in our minds with the slaughter of the Holy Innocents, had not yet been guilty of any cruel act, but even enjoyed a great reputation for generosity, courage, and military experience, qualities which form the hero, while his affable and gracious manners won general favour. But Eleazar had excellent reasons for not wishing to be known, so he withdrew from sight, taking his daughter with him.

He heard afterwards from his landlord that the Senate had nominated Herod king of Judea; that this prince had set sail immediately for Ptolemais, in Galilee, where he had agreed with his partisans on the plan of war he was intending to carry on against Antigonus; and that, returning after to Brundusium, he had raised auxiliary forces, and had chartered the ships already in that port to convey them to Palestine; for he was determined to possess himself by force of the crown which he had obtained by intrigue.

When they had heard this news, Eleazar and Zechariah consulted on the best course to pursue. Eleazar perceived clearly that it was too late to

succeed in the object of his mission ; however, he did not in the least regret having undertaken it, for it appeared to him that all his melancholy presentiments were on the point of being realized. Palestine would soon become the theatre of civil war ; Jerusalem would be besieged, and probably taken by storm, and a great part of its inhabitants massacred. So he rejoiced at having removed his daughter, and felt strengthened in his resolve to leave her at Rome at the house of a friend, until peace should be fully re-established in the Holy City.

On the contrary, Zechariah did not despair of the success of the negotiation, in spite of the treaty concluded by the Roman Government with Herod. Knowing Marc Antony's character, he felt persuaded that it was not impossible, by offering a higher price, to induce him to change his decision. The question was to obtain a new decree from the servility of the Senate ; but for that, it would be necessary to gain over some of the most eloquent members of that body, who were usually the easiest to corrupt, by representing to them how very impolitic it would be to dispossess of the crown a king as disposed as Antigonus undoubtedly was to assist

the republic with all his forces. Besides, neither this prince nor his competitor could lay any just claim to the throne; for Hyrcanus, the rightful monarch, still lived, though a captive in a distant country.

‘Well,’ cried Eleazar, ‘if, as you seem to think, jewels can buy a man, Marc Antony is ours. Now, since we agree, the first thing we have to do is to find out the quickest way of getting to Rome.’

It was settled that, as Zechariah was not personally known to Herod, he should make the necessary arrangements, while his companions remained quiet in the hostelry. So he set off to the ‘Forum,’ where the idle generally congregated, and having found out all he wanted, returned in the direction of the town.

As he passed in front of an ancient temple, situated at the extremity of an almost deserted street, he stopped a moment to examine it, with a feeling of admiration for its architecture, and of contempt for the worship to which it was consecrated. Then he walked round it, and found a small door half closed, as though the temple was entirely abandoned; and impelled by curiosity, seeing no one about, he entered it noiselessly, and

shut the door in such a way as to be able to escape if necessary. The scene which presented itself from the corner where he had cowered down on entering failed not to cause him some apprehension. It was the anniversary when the statue of the goddess worshipped in this temple was to be covered with fresh ornaments, and for this purpose twelve matrons had been selected from the first families of Brundisium.

As Zechariah did not know that it was a capital crime for a man to take any part in these mysteries, he first of all examined the interior of the building. They had carefully excluded the light of day, and replaced it by the brightness of lamps suspended from the ceiling, and by large candelabra placed in the aisles. The goddess was seated on a pedestal, and her dimensions appeared so colossal to Zechariah, that he could not but smile when he reflected that, should she rise, her head must undoubtedly carry away the roof of the edifice. But his attention was soon withdrawn from the statue, by the singular occupation of the women surrounding her. Lifting up their offerings, as though to show them to the goddess, who was supposed to behold them with pleasure, they kissed their hands,

and then spread them out towards the idol, in sign of adoration.

On a table were laid out new ornaments, in which they were going to dress her out; and this could only take place after certain preliminary ceremonies, which they fulfilled in the most profound silence. One shook a gold comb about three feet away from the head of the statue, pretending to comb her hair; another presented her with water in a silver ewer to wash her hands, and a third did as much for her feet; whilst a fourth held before her in one hand a box of perfumes and cosmetics, in the other a polished silver mirror. In a word, all of them did the work of waiting-women to the idol. The grave air and the respectful gestures of the twelve matrons made such a striking contrast with the ridiculous absurdity of their occupation—they looked so exactly like great children playing at dressing dolls, that, notwithstanding all his efforts, Zechariah could not contain himself, but burst out into a fit of laughter, which re-echoed through the whole building.

The matrons turned their eyes to the corner whence this irreverent sound came, and, having seen the beard of the guilty one before he had

time to draw back his head, they became aware that the mystery of their ceremonies had been profaned by the impiety of an intruder. Cries of horror and of rage immediately testified their indignation and wrath. Zechariah saw the danger threatening him; so he rose, escaped from the temple, and ran by the less frequented streets as far as the port, where he jumped into a boat, ordering the boatman to row him to the opposite shore.

After a long round, he entered the hostelry where he had left his companions. As he had on several occasions advised Eleazar to avoid wounding without necessity the religious opinions of idolaters, he said not a single word of his unpleasant adventure, but contented himself with informing them of the news he had heard on the subject of their mission, and Herod's warlike preparations.

It appeared that the men whom Herod had been allowed to enrol in Italy were only freed gladiators and adventurers, whom the Roman Government were not sorry to remove out of the country; besides, if these men could not do much honour to their employer, neither could they

render him important services. As to the means of travelling that Eleazar and his party might make use of for arriving at the end of their journey, Zechariah added that, according to a lately published edict, every one entrusted with public service, either going to Rome or returning, had the right of being conducted thither at the Government expense. Now as Eleazar, in his quality of ambassador, might avail himself of this privilege, it was only requisite for him to apply to the prætor to obtain it.

Zechariah advised Eleazar to present his petition as soon as they had dined; for after what had happened to him in the temple, he was burning with the desire to leave the place as soon as possible.

However, their repast did not terminate without a new unpleasantness, which, joined to what Zechariah had undergone, was a sad presage of the vexations that might await them on the Roman territory.

The strangers had been introduced into a dining-room, where a large half-circular table was set out. Around this table Eleazar noticed couches, on which it was then the fashion in Italy to lie

at their meals, and he could not avoid expressing his discontent at the sight.

Looking upon this custom as an effeminate innovation, as well as contrary to decency, he had strongly opposed it, when several of his compatriots, who prided themselves in copying the Romans, had wished to introduce it into Jerusalem.

Thinking that surely he had the right to eat in the hostelry in the way he liked best, he gave an order for chairs to be placed instead of couches. The severe tone displeased the slave who was waiting on them ; however, he obeyed, and every difficulty seemed to have vanished, when a fresh incident produced new dangers.





CHAPTER XIV.

IMPRISONMENT.

ELEAZAR could content himself with nothing: he saw he must necessarily infringe the strict letter of the law, not by eating forbidden meats,—that he would never have done under any circumstances,—but by partaking of the flesh of animals not killed and prepared according to the prescribed forms among the Hebrews.

The conversation had been carried on in Latin. The slave who was waiting on them, believing that Eleazar ran down the productions of his country, and above all scandalized that a foreigner should dare assume so critical a tone, told him with some spite, that it was quite impossible to find better meat throughout the universe; adding, as

he lowered his voice, as though speaking very confidentially, that his master always bought any beef he required from the priests of Jupiter, who never offered up any but the choicest beasts.

‘What!’ cried Eleazar, shuddering with horror; ‘do you mean to tell me that this meat has been offered on the altars of idols?’

‘Offered up to Jupiter, the sovereign of the gods!’ replied the slave.

‘Unfortunate that I am! my lips have then touched flesh polluted by the hands of the priests of Moloch!’

The slave, who could not guess the cause of the sudden paleness of Eleazar’s countenance, and the trembling of his limbs, declared that all travellers regarded it as a great honour to be served with the flesh of animals offered up to the sovereign of the gods, to the master of the universe.

‘To whom darest thou give that sacred name?’ continued Eleazar, carried away by his zeal; ‘is it to this Jupiter, who dethroned and mutilated his own father?—to this debauched Jupiter, who defiled himself by every crime? Dost thou dare call him the supreme master of the universe? Go away, wretched being! go and prostrate thyself at

the feet of thy marble god, and wipe away the dust and the filth that cover him; for the bats have perched on his head, and the owls have soiled his beard, without his having the power merely to raise his hand and chase them away. His sceptre has not had sufficient strength to break the webs with which the spiders have covered him, and his eagle has been powerless to put to flight the toad that has cast its venom over the thunderbolts that he holds between his claws!’

It was now the slave’s turn to be seized with horror at hearing this violent harangue against his god.

‘O all-powerful Jupiter!’ cried he; ‘Jupiter who hurlest the thunderbolt! and ye all, gods and goddesses!’

And he escaped hurriedly.

‘My friends,’ said Eleazar, turning to his companions, ‘if we have violated the law, it was in ignorance; we are innocent in the eyes of the Lord.’

‘Do not let us lose our time in useless discourse at this moment,’ said Zechariah, interrupting Eleazar. ‘I am going at once to the prætor; and you had better prepare for our departure, for I fear that this accursed slave will go and divulge

all that has just happened, and then we shall be arrested immediately, as impious persons and blasphemers, and offered up to the manes of the gods and the furies.'

Zechariah had not left the house before they heard an extraordinary noise in the street.

'May the Lord protect my father!' said Zipporah, turning very pale.

'Do not alarm yourself, Zipporah,' replied Zechariah; 'these heathen are doubtless celebrating one of their numerous festivals, for scarcely a day passes without some procession, attended by great noise, proceeding to one temple or another.'

Thus saying, Zechariah approached a window, and to his great terror, saw a numerous crowd advancing towards the hostelry, uttering loud cries and making threatening gestures. He was soon noticed, and the crowd drew on, animated with fresh ardour.

At the head of this mob were seen two of the matrons that Zechariah had disturbed in their mysterious operations, and also the slave who had felt so aggrieved by Eleazar's words. It was pretty plain that the rabble only approached the inn with the intention of revenging the double

outrage committed against the tutelary divinities of the town.

As the slave was on his way to the temple of Jupiter, to inform the priests of the insulting manner in which a foreigner had just spoken of their god, he had met there with two matrons, who had likewise come to bring their complaint. It was decided that if the two culprits were not the same, at least they must belong to the same party ; and the populace, transported with indignation, had followed the slave to the hostelry.

When Zechariah had retired from the window, he told his companions that they must expect a disagreeable scene. In a few words he confessed to them the imprudence he had been guilty of in entering the temple, and offered himself as the scapegoat for his friends, advising Eleazar to claim protection and liberty in virtue of his rank of ambassador, a character always held in great esteem by the Romans.

Zechariah was interrupted in his advice by loud threats, and hard blows against the door, which Jehoiakim had taken the precaution to shut.

The door was burst open, and Eleazar advanced a step to meet these madmen, in the hope of

calming them ; but this hope would have been groundless, if the prætor had not appeared just then on the scene at the head of a company of soldiers. The appearance of this magistrate, who had fortunately been apprised of the excited feelings of the mob, was quite sufficient to remove all fear ; it ought to have inspired confidence, for his features presented an expression of honesty and kindness which could not be mistaken.

‘Lictors, bring your fasces!’ cried he, stopping about two steps from the door. Then turning to the Hebrews, ‘Foreigners,’ added he, ‘I am the prætor of Brundisium. You are my prisoners ; submit without resistance.’

‘We give ourselves up,’ said Eleazar, making a signal to Jehoiakim to put his sword back into the scabbard ; ‘I only ask protection and safety for my daughter.’

‘Oh, spare my father!’ cried Zipporah, advancing towards the prætor ; ‘he is sent to the Roman Senate by the King of the Jews, whose ambassador he is ; and this sacred character ought to make his person inviolable.’

‘Well, well, we will examine your title ; in the meantime follow me. Lictors, go forward, and

make a passage through the crowd. Centurion! you and your soldiers will take charge of these audacious foreigners. I myself will accompany them, and see them safely lodged in prison.'

He then spoke to Zipporah in an undertone: 'Fear neither for yourself nor your friends, young lady. Trust in me; follow me silently, and you will all get out of your difficulties.'

As soon as the Jews were in the street, the mob crowded around them with threatening looks, and horrible expressions of hatred.

'Let us seize these long-bearded barbarians! Let us arrest these blasphemers! Let them be killed! Let them be immolated at the foot of the altars!'

But the soldiers who escorted the prisoners soon made the multitude look to their own safety. The heedless and thoughtless looks of the soldiers, too much accustomed to the cruel scenes of war to allow themselves to be intimidated by the brawling and clamouring of the rabble; the furious features of the populace, who still persisted in their imprecations; the downcast countenances of Eleazar and his companions, arrested the attention of the passers-by, who inquired what it all meant; but learning that these culprits were Jews, who were accused of

having blasphemed the gods, they pursued their way without showing the least emotion or the slightest compassion.

In this manner they were conducted through the streets to a tower near one of the gates of the town, which was then used as a prison. There they were put into a dark room, and the massive door closed upon them. By degrees the threatening clamour of the populace ceased to be heard, and the prisoners had leisure to reflect on the consequences of this unexpected and unpleasant reception on the Roman territory.

The chamber was a very gloomy one, but it was sufficiently light to allow them to see large rings fastened to the walls, and names roughly cut in the stones supporting them, only proving too plainly that many unfortunate mortals had sought to beguile the weariness of their captivity,—a captivity from which, most probably, they had only been delivered by death.

In the meantime, Zechariah tried to rouse the courage of his companions by showing unlimited confidence in the prætor's good intentions. His idea was that they had been cast into prison merely to let them escape from the furious fanaticism of the

populace ; and to strengthen his opinion, he made them notice that they had been allowed to keep their arms, and also that they had not even been searched.

But Eleazar could not feel the same confidence. He feared that the title of Antigonus' ambassador, which he had sought to turn to account in their favour, might prove the real cause of their ruin ; for Herod might get to hear of it, and would not fail to take every precaution to baffle their projects. Under the influence of these melancholy apprehensions, Eleazar regretted most bitterly having brought his daughter with him ; and he would have given all he possessed in the world if they could only reach Rome, where he could place her safely under the protection of a friend of his own country and faith.

In order to turn her father's attention from these sad presentiments, Zipporah reminded him that, although no accusation had been brought against herself and Jehoiakim, they had been sent to prison, which to her mind seemed a proof that their imprisonment was only a precautionary measure, and that the prætor would come and set them all at liberty, as soon as he saw that it was safe to do so.

'May the Lord grant it !' replied Eleazar ; and he lifted his eyes to heaven, and prayed.



CHAPTER XV.

THE PRÆTOR.

IN the meantime, night drew on, and the prisoners were in complete darkness. They heard the guard relieved and the gates of the town shut; and as afterwards there was profound silence, only interrupted by the sentinel's march, they began to fear that they would be left to pass the night in this dismal place without any furniture—not even a miserable bed of straw to rest upon.

By degrees they left off speaking to each other, when Zipporah, knowing that nothing was more likely to revive the patriotic courage of her companions than the consolations of religion, exclaimed in an animated tone of voice: ‘What! have we not the God of Jacob for our protector? this same God who delivered our fathers from Egyptian bondage

as well as Babylonian captivity? Why, then, should we allow ourselves to be discouraged, when we know that God is with us in this prison, and that He hears our prayers? If my memory does not fail me, I will sing the psalm in which David teaches us not to put our trust in man, but in God. This psalm is exactly suitable to our present position; and even supposing that it suited us less, I should still feel proud to make these walls resound with the praises of the Lord, and to force the echoes, that have so frequently repeated the cries of the heathen calling upon their idols, to respond for the first time to the accents of a child of Israel imploring the succour of the only true God.'

Darkness and solitude imparted to the sweet voice of the young Jewish maiden a character of piety and solemnity that it had never before seemed to possess; and the beautiful and confiding feelings expressed in the 118th Psalm awoke so much enthusiasm in her hearers, that they felt greatly comforted.

'“The Lord is on my side, I will not fear.” Yes,' said Eleazar, 'what can man do unto me?'

Courage and confidence sprang up anew in their breasts, as they joined their voices to Zipporah's,

and they all sang the last verses of this appropriate and solacing psalm.

They had scarcely finished when their jailor came into the room with a lamp in his hand, and told them that the prætor had ordered him to conduct them into a better apartment. They followed him into a well-furnished room, fitted up with three beds ; in an adjoining closet was another bed, prepared for Zipporah.

This happy change taking place immediately after singing the psalm, filled the prisoners with joy and gratitude, and by inspiring them with confidence in the prætor's intentions, increased what they already felt in the sovereign Arbiter of their destiny.

Their satisfaction became still greater, when, by the light of the lamp left them by the jailor, they saw two slaves attached to the prison service bringing them a supper, which, though simple, had evidently been prepared with some degree of care. This mark of attention appeared to them so favourable an augury, that they partook of this meal with more cheerfulness than they could have believed it possible only a few moments before. Eleazar afterwards conducted their usual acts of praise to

their Almighty Father, and he and his companions thought only of retiring to rest.

After a refreshing sleep, Zipporah awoke at dawn of day from the noise made by the villagers bringing their goods to market, and calling out to the soldiers to open the gate. She rose, and putting her head out of the window, amused herself by watching the numbers of persons on the road. All at once she heard her father call her; and at the same time she fancied she could distinguish a strange voice in the room where he was. She found the prætor there. He saluted her politely, inquiring if she was ready to start. You may judge that she soon said she was quite ready.

Then, placing a finger on his lips to enjoin silence, he signified to them to follow him, and led them to the gate of the tower, where a car awaited them with an escort of armed men. They seated themselves, and, preceded by the prætor mounted on a handsome charger, they left the town, and went at a rapid pace along the 'Appian Road.'

When they had passed the outskirts of the town, the prætor commanded the soldiers to remain behind a few moments, and, approaching the car, he began to talk to Eleazar.

‘You have been unfortunate,’ said he, ‘but you can only blame your own imprudence. However, the danger is now over, and you are safe and sound on the road leading to your destination. In this town there is a certain Caius Drusus, an intriguing man, who wishes to make himself popular, that he may be nominated quæstor, and who, as I heard last night, has promised the mob that you shall be called up for judgment before the Forum ; supposing they did so, you would probably never more see the light of day. I sent you to this prison near the gate, that I might be able to contrive your departure the more effectually ; and you see I have succeeded.’

Eleazar thanked him for his kindness to them all, and said : ‘It was my belief that the Romans tolerated all religions ; I see to-day that I was mistaken.’

‘No, you are not mistaken. We not only tolerate, but even adopt, all religions that we can. You will find temples erected at Rome not only to all the divinities we know, but even to those we know not, for fear of failing, through ignorance, to pay homage to some one of them. But we cannot agree with you Jews, who attack and reprove every form of worship but your own.’

‘We are certain that we are on the right way ; and as there can be only one right way, that is to say, there can be only one true religion, we ought necessarily to proscribe all others as false, absurd, sacrilegious.’

‘Granted ; but since you are not our masters, that you can neither forbid us nor force upon us the worship of your God, why have the Romans rejected Him when they have adopted others as silly as they are barbarous ?’

‘The reason is a very simple one. In your gods you must have such as your passions call for,—easy gods, convenient gods, polluted even with the vices you cherish, that you may give yourself up with less shame to all your sinful desires.’

‘And the God of the Jews ?’

‘Is a jealous God, who will not share His glory with another ; a pure and holy God, who commands holiness, and abhors all that is contrary to His perfections, all that debases man from the dignity to which he has been raised in coming out of the hands of his great Creator.’

However, these words, uttered in the solemn and enthusiastic voice which invariably marked Eleazar’s discourse when it related to religion,

did not make the expected impression on the prætor.

‘Perhaps,’ said the latter, with a playful smile, ‘you imagine that I am going to quarrel with you, as many a faithful worshipper of my country’s gods would not fail to do?’

‘Have you no faith, then, in the object of your worship?’

‘O hospitable Jupiter! thou who presidest over oaths!’ said the prætor in a mocking tone; ‘pardon me, O Jupiter! thou who drivest the clouds, if, in spite of thy innumerable functions, I confess quite low that I do not believe one word of thy divinity. Ah! we must indeed be great fools, we who compose the enlightened class, we who count ourselves philosophers, if we believe in the inventions of the poets, in the thirty thousand divinities of the common people!’

‘However, these same common people allow their gods to be publicly turned into ridicule by the comic authors of their country,’ replied Eleazar.

‘Yes, even so; because they like to see their superiors, whether of heaven or earth, brought down to their own level. But a sarcasm from an infidel like you becomes a personal insult; and the people

adore their own opinions far too religiously to permit them to be openly outraged.'

'It seems very strange to me,' continued Eleazar, 'that you should have a religion for the people that the upper classes recognise and uphold without believing in it.'

'It is necessary to keep the people quiet, to preserve order and public peace.'

'What sort of order?—an order consisting of acts of confusion, of outrage, of hatred, of violence?—of order such as we saw yesterday at the hostelry?'

The prætor said nothing; he withdrew behind the carriage, and thus allowed the travellers the opportunity of saying what they thought of him to each other.

After having talked some time together, they saw their escort march past with a quick step, and the prætor again came near the car. He pointed out a house at the side of the road, told them this was his villa, adding that he hoped they would not refuse to take some refreshments before continuing their journey to Rome. The invitation was too honest and kind to be refused; and notwithstanding Eleazar's wish to leave the neighbourhood of Brundisium as soon as possible, he con-

sented to partake of the dinner that the prætor had prepared for them.

Before leaving the villa, the magistrate gave them an order addressed to the commissioners of the Appian Road. In virtue of the law *Julia de Provinciis*, they were obliged to conduct Eleazar and his suite to Rome, as they were charged with a public mission, and to furnish them on their road with lodging, fire, salt, hay, and straw, at the Government expense.

Furnished with this species of passport, our travellers renewed their thanks to the prætor for the generous manner in which he had helped them in a very critical moment, and then bade him farewell.

They afterwards got up again in the car, regained the Appian Road, and pursued their journey towards the capital of the Empire.





CHAPTER XVI.

ITALIAN SCENERY.

AFTER having been so long on the sea, Zipporah sighed for the mountains, the valleys, the woods, the streams, and the beautiful grass of the fields. Since leaving Brun-
dusium, she had not only passed through a tract of uninteresting country, but the pre-occupation of her mind at the sight of the armed escort following them had not allowed her to give but a few rapid glances at the landscape; so now her eyes beheld with great pleasure the rich scenery surrounding her on all sides. The freshness of the shade seemed to communicate itself to her entire being; and seeing the little rivulet meandering in the meadow, afforded her the sweet influence of its clear and limpid water.

In her own beloved Palestine she had seen valleys, and even large, fertile, and laughing plains; but beyond, the eye never failed to discover some bleak, sharp mountain, raising its frowning front like a ferocious spectre. Here the landscape, as far as the view extended, and however varied in its details, presented a uniform appearance of softness and beauty. The hills, the valleys, the woods, the vineyards and oliveyards succeeded each other without interruption, either to blend with the horizon, or lose themselves in the neighbourhood of the Apulian Mounts.

Zipporah never grew tired of admiring this magnificent spectacle, whose tranquillity was so much in harmony with the peace of her own soul. By degrees she fell into a profound reverie, not taking any part in the conversation. Drawing a deep sigh, she at length seemed to awake; her father looked at her with an anxious countenance, and inquired what was the matter with her.

‘My father,’ she replied, ‘in contemplating this lovely country around us, I thought of the unfortunate, blind, misguided creatures who inhabit it. Everything shows them and preaches to them the greatness and goodness of God, and they will not

know Him. Instead of returning thanks to Him, they prostrate themselves before a block of stone fashioned by their own hands, or gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, or wood, which time destroys.'

'Dost thou remember the words of David, my child? After having said to the Lord: "O Lord, how great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep!"—he adds: "A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this"'—

Here Eleazar was suddenly interrupted by the unexpected appearance of a company of villagers, coming out of an adjoining wood, and who, on approaching a stone post, crowned the bust surmounting it with flowers, singing and dancing around it.

'Look at the fools!' exclaimed Eleazar; 'I suppose that this stone is one of the landmarks separating estates, their god "Terminus," the god of boundaries, as he is called, to whom they present offerings, and in whose honour they sing hymns at certain epochs of the year. They have given him no feet, because he must never leave the spot where he has been placed. Here we may recognise the superiority of the Hebrews over the Gentiles, even in things belonging to civil life. It

was sufficient with us for Moses to pronounce a curse on whosoever should change his neighbour's boundary, and from that time to our days this law has been looked upon as inviolable. But these unfortunates degrade the whole of nature. The fields are profaned, the waters are corrupted, the fountains are poisoned, because all these things are consecrated to false gods and polluted by infamous sacrifices. Have they not even defiled the sky, in giving to the stars the names of unchaste women, of tyrants, of murderers—in a word, of all that is most vile and most hateful ?'

'Driver,' interrupted Zechariah, 'what is the name of the neighbouring town ?'

'Gnatia.'

'Is there a pretty good prison there ?'

'Have you any motive for asking this question ?'

'Perhaps a very great one.'

Then, turning to his relative, Zechariah said to him in Hebrew :

'Really, Rabbi Eleazar, if you continue in this manner to express your feelings aloud before our driver, and so plainly demonstrate what you think of all the follies of the heathen, I verily believe we shall sooner find the inside of a prison than a

protector like the one who saved us from the hands of the rabble at Brundusium.'

Eleazar sighed, crossed his arms on his breast, held down his head, and was silent, for he knew the prudence of this observation. The conversation soon dropped with his companions; and at last they arrived at the town which their driver had mentioned as Gnatia, and where they intended to pass the night.

Immediately on their presenting the prætor's order, a lodging was assigned them at the principal hostelry. The master of the house, jealous to make known the prerogatives of his natal town, hastened to tell the travellers of the miracle which at this epoch amused Horace and his companions so much. (Horace, Sat. I.)

The inhabitants of Gnatia pretended that, having placed some incense on the altar of their temple, it burned miraculously without the help of fire. But Eleazar, instead of laughing at it like the Epicurean philosopher, began at once an animated dissertation upon the knavery of heathen priests,—a dissertation which might have had serious consequences, if Zipporah had not hastened to dismiss the landlord.

‘My father,’ said the young girl, ‘do not forget that you are charged with a mission of peace.’

‘Ah!’ my daughter, ‘would it be possible for a Hebrew, a priest of the true God, to remain silent, when he sees these heathen distort our miracles, or rather steal them from us? For what is their mythology, if not counterfeits of the finest traits in our history? Is it not singular that they should attribute to infamous deities the miracles wrought by Heaven in favour of the chosen seed?’

Instead of replying to her father, the Jewish maiden sat down near a window, and, raising her eyes to heaven, chanted a canticle composed by herself.

‘Embrace me, my child,’ said Eleazar when she had finished; ‘thy voice has calmed my troubled spirit and filled it with peace. Yes, I feel how helpless I am to fight against the evil that I reprove. But the Messiah will come: He will silence these lying oracles, which draw the world into idolatry and crime; He will confound these impostors of priests, who take unworthy advantage of the ignorance of their dupes.’

The travellers continued to proceed by short day journeys, as was then the custom, and arrived

at the Apulian Mounts, of which some were so steep, that, notwithstanding the good state of the Appian Road, their horses found some difficulty in climbing them. Enormous masses of rocks topped with venerable oaks arose on their right, while to the left was a large deep trench for carrying off the water, which in mountainous countries often forms irresistible torrents.

As the travellers were slowly going up one of these heights, they heard the voices of several persons calling to one another from the opposite side of the mountain. On arriving at the top, they stopped, struck with terror at the sight before their eyes.

A man, whom the driver recognised as a gladiator, was perched on a high branch. In his mouth he held a knife, and by the help of his hands and knees he continued to crawl over this aerial bridge, which ended nowhere. The branch shook under his weight, and threatened every moment to break; underneath was a large pool of blood, proceeding from a wound that the unfortunate man had in his leg. Several of his comrades were around the tree; they had come to ask their master if they should put a few arrows into the fugitive to make him fall down.

‘No,’ replied the master; ‘he is the best of all my men, and I have promised to introduce him at the games at Capua.’

Then raising his voice, so as to be heard by the man at the top of the tree, he tried to persuade him to come down willingly, making him the most solemn promises of granting him his freedom after the Capuan games.

‘You have very often made me the same promise,’ said the gladiator, ‘and you have always broken it.’

‘You are right; but this time I swear it by Castor and Pollux.’

‘Consent to dip both your hands in the blood spilt beneath me, to raise them to heaven, and swear by Hercules that you will set me free.’

‘Yes, certainly,’ replied the master; adding in an undertone, ‘An oath the more will not make much difference in my account.’

So he went to the pool of blood, and bent to dip his hands in it. But the gladiator, reduced to despair by the evident impossibility of escape, knowing from sad experience that his master’s most solemn oaths were quite worthless, and resolved that at the same moment he and his oppressor

should die together, had no sooner enticed him under the tree, than he fell on him, and both were crushed to death on the paved road.

‘Go on, driver,’ said Eleazar. The sad result of this awful scene had aroused him from his stupor, and had made Zipporah faint away. The carriage drove on rapidly.





CHAPTER XVII.

MARC ANTONY.

WHEN the Jewish maiden had recovered from her fainting-fit, she endeavoured to overcome the emotion caused by this catastrophe by watching the varied beauties of nature ; but at the foot of the mountain a spectacle awaited them almost as frightful as the one they had so recently witnessed.

On a chariot belonging to the gang of gladiators, of whom they had seen a part, the Hebrews perceived a poor wounded man, whose garments were tinged with blood. His eyes appeared languid, but his countenance wore a ferocious appearance, which doubtless, in his opinion, indicated a courage above the agony caused by his wounds. Some of his companions walked beside the chariot. From their

fierce aspect, any one might have thought that they exercised their bloody trade by free choice, instead of by force.

When they heard from the driver of the accident that had lately happened, their unfeelingness only found it a matter for gross jests, worthy of the brutal school in which they had been brought up. The wounded man tried to join in their coarse jokes ; but the anguish visible on his disfigured features, and in his hollow, sepulchral voice, imparted to his jovialness something frightful and disgusting, enough to revolt even his boon companions.

‘The horrors of these barbarous customs,’ said Elcazar, while the gladiators went on, ‘ought to make us duly appreciate the humanity of God’s chosen people in the midst of the surrounding nations. Have we not already seen bands of slaves in Italy,—slaves chained together, and forced by blows to water their masters’ fields with the sweat of their brow ? Even so the gladiators, who are persons carried off in the numerous wars made by these barbarians against the remainder of the world. But this universal oppression does not rest without chastisement ; it is found sometimes in the very heart of victory. The tyrant feared

by all must in his turn fear all. It is precisely the same with a nation of tyrants. Like sacrificial victims, whom nature sometimes prompts to make vigorous efforts to escape the knife, these slaves, these gladiators, have been seen rising against their oppressors—even forming an army inspired by despair, and threatening Rome with fearful vengeance. In the midst of peace, when all seems crawling servilely around her, this proud city is never a moment without fearing this danger. Let her rather fear to hear the trumpet of the destroying angel re-echo in her streets, and stifle the songs of joy and the cries of victory which fill it to-day. The Lord have pity on its blindness, and send a prophet, as He sent Jonah to the inhabitants of Nineveh, in order that it might repent in dust and ashes, and so turn away the wrath of Heaven, with which it was menaced !’

‘Amen!’ said Jehoiakim, drawing himself up with holy pride.

‘And I too,’ added Zechariah, ‘I will respond “Amen” with all my heart to all you say in Hebrew, as you have just done ; but once again I beseech you, Rabbi, not to slide one word of Latin into your speech when you are in this humour.’

The distance from Brundisium to Rome is only three hundred and sixty miles ; and although the destiny of the empire depended on their journey, which had for its object to reconcile Octavius and Antony, Horace and his companions were a fortnight on the road. Our travellers went a little faster, and twelve days after leaving Brundisium they arrived in the Campagna.

They had just entered a forest, when a frightful roaring struck their ears ; the horses stood still by themselves, and the car stopped so abruptly that they were nearly all upset.

‘O my father ! some terrible animal is coming to attack us !’ exclaimed Zipporah, rising and placing herself by an unguarded movement in front of her father, as though to protect him.

‘The Lord be with us !’ said Eleazar, rising in his turn, and pressing his daughter in his arms.

All eyes were turned in the direction where they had heard the roar, when they saw an uncovered car come out of the forest, drawn by two enormous lions, and preceded by lictors crowned with laurel.

A man was seated in this car, whose bushy beard, large forehead, aquiline nose, and grave physiognomy, gave him an imposing appearance. His

garments were in imitation of those worn by Hercules, whose features he seemed to wish to recall. Beside him was reclining a very beautiful woman, splendidly dressed, and covered with jewels. Behind came several horsemen, and another carriage drawn by mules, evidently accustomed to the society of the lions.

All at once Zechariah imagined that this might be some religious ceremony, and he hastened to tell his friends, so as to dispel their fears; but Jehoiakim did not seem at all disposed to put back his sword into the scabbard, and he was still brandishing it, as though determined not to be taken by surprise.

Meantime the car advanced on the road, and the lady burst into fits of laughter at seeing the Levite's threatening attitude.

'Well,' said she to the Israelites, 'why do you look at me with such astonishment? Is this the first time that you have seen Volumnia? But you are foreigners, else you would at least have recognised Marc Antony. Does he not perfectly resemble Hercules? And I—have I not some resemblance to Omphale?' And a fresh burst of laughter ended this speech.

Eleazar rose on the car, and fixing a stern look

on her who had spoken to him, 'Madam,' said he, 'it is true that we are foreigners lately come to your country, and having no acquaintance with Roman manners; but permit me to say that I can scarcely believe that Marc Antony, the illustrious triumvir, whose duty it is to set an example to others, would thus drive on the high-road disguised and drawn by wild animals.'

A general laugh followed these words, which they looked upon as a reprimand, though that was very far from Eleazar's intention; he really thought the lady was joking, and did not believe it would be Marc Antony before him.

The triumvir, who passionately loved anything of a joke, and who enjoyed the perplexed aspect of the new-comers, would willingly have prolonged this scene; but Volumnia had noticed Zipporah, and only paying attention to her fears and her jealousy, she ordered the lictors to let the lions start.

Whilst the procession went on and entered another avenue in the forest, Antony gave an expressive signal to one of his parasites, named Pyttalus, and immediately disappeared behind the trees.

We think it well to remind the reader, that when Antony and Octavius began to dispute the empire

of the world, their first dissensions were pacified by the mediation of mutual friends ; and that, in order to cement the bands of friendship, Antony married Octavia, sister of his rival. But this arrangement did not produce any lasting effect on the ambitious and irritable character of Antony, whose credulous superstition aggravated fears and suspicions. An Egyptian astrologer had assured him that the star of his fortune was eclipsed by that of Octavius ; and several other circumstances, insignificant in themselves, had seemed to justify this assertion. Truly, whether they drew lots or played at dice, Antony always lost and Octavius won.

Under the influence of these gloomy forebodings, Antony prepared to leave Italy, to return to his government in the East. Meanwhile he behaved to Octavia more as his rival's sister than his wife ; he treated her with marked neglect, often amounting to contempt.

It was thus that, to mortify Octavius in the person of his sister, he formed a connection with a woman who, after having successively been both slave and actress, had rendered herself shamefully notorious under the names of Cythera, Licoris, and Volumnia ; and, according to Cicero's second Philippic,

he intended her to accompany him in all his travels.

As he pretended to be descended from Hercules, he assumed the costume of this hero, even to being drawn by tame lions, and followed by a band of debauchees, whose society pleased him above everything.

In the number of these last was Pyttalus, a crafty Greek, whose ostensible profession was that of a physician. Pyttalus remarked the impression that Zipporah's youthful charms had made on the triumvir, so he remained behind, to find out the name, quality, and destination of the beautiful foreigner. He drew near to the Hebrews, telling them that he was particularly charged by his patron to express his regret for the terror he had caused them; then he questioned them very ingeniously on the cause of their journey, as well as the place where they intended lodging in Rome.

As soon as Eleazar felt really convinced that it was Marc Antony they had encountered in such extraordinary costume, he frankly confessed the object of his journey, and the character with which he was invested; adding, that he trusted that the triumvir would not take offence at the observa-

tions he had made in ignorance of his person and station.

Pyttalus hastened to reassure him on this point, telling him that his patron was full of frankness, and that above all things he admired openness in others. When he had obtained all the information he wished for from Eleazar, he advised him to inquire for the physician Pyttalus whenever he presented himself before Marc Antony; then he bade the travellers farewell, and they continued their journey.





CHAPTER XVIII.

THEIR ARRIVAL AT ROME.

HERE is Rome!' exclaimed the driver, making his horses stop at the top of a small hill for a moment; and the Hebrews turned eagerly to the point designated by him, where they beheld Rome, the City of the Seven Hills,—Rome, the Mistress of the world! There it was, now rising, now falling, as though it had been built on the waves. Some temples showed their majestic domes, appearing like vessels of war sailing on an ocean covered with gunboats.

Although the distance did not allow of any one distinguishing the petty details of this magnificent painting, Zipporah could not contemplate it without deep emotion. Reflecting that she saw in some degree the heart of the universe, in whose inmost recesses the destinies of mankind were concentrated,

her thoughts turned to Jerusalem, and she felt, with deep sorrow, how useless it would be for her compatriots to attempt to contend with a people as powerful as the Romans. But what would have been her astonishment if any one had told her that Jerusalem, this favoured city, chosen by the Lord Himself, would be reprobated and destroyed for not acknowledging its Saviour; and that Rome, then the centre of polytheism, would become so celebrated in the new kingdom that the Messiah was to establish upon earth!

At length the travellers drew near the suburbs,—which they had been really approaching some time,—in the shape of temples, triumphal arches, porticos, groves, country-houses, all thrown together in the most picturesque confusion. Very soon the houses formed an uninterrupted line on each side, and the carriage conveying Eleazar and his companions was obliged to slacken its speed to pass through the crowd on the Appian Road. Our travellers' conveyance was even compelled to stop under the city walls, to make room for a detachment of soldiers coming out by the Capena Gate. This was the Celtic Legion, completely equipped for war. The strangers could not help admiring the singular

features of these veterans, with light hair, and their brilliant armour ; but they could not restrain a smile at seeing them preceded by augurs and auspices. As these priests were commanded to point out the most favourable days for battles, they took with them a cart containing the sacred chickens, which were to reveal the future according to the way in which they took their food. As the road was now clear, the travellers passed the gate and entered the city of Rome.

Although the time had not yet arrived when Octavius, decorated with the titles of Augustus and Cæsar, and disposing as absolute master of all the vast resources of the empire, might say that he had found a city of bricks and left one of marble, notwithstanding, Rome already possessed some of these massive and imposing edifices, of which the ruins attest even to this day the ancient magnificence. But what particularly struck Eleazar was the multitude of fountains and aqueducts with which they met at each step ; whilst at Jerusalem, it was often most difficult to procure the water necessary for the numerous purifications prescribed by the law ; and it must be owned that this comparison caused him secret envy.

Meanwhile the car stopped, and the driver informed them that they had arrived at the fourth house in the street called Janus.

‘Hosanna! Glory be to the Lord!’ exclaimed Eleazar, transported with joy; ‘this is the residence of my worthy and old friend Manasseh. Zipporah, my dear child, thou wilt be safe from all danger, for thou wilt here find a second father.’

The driver knocked at the door; it was opened by a slave.

‘Tell me,’ said Eleazar, ‘is Manasseh at home?’

‘Yesterday he started for Tyre with all his family,’ replied the slave. ‘The evening before he had a letter, saying that his eldest daughter, wife of a merchant in that city, was dangerously ill, and that her life was despaired of.’

‘Ah!’ cried Eleazar, striking his breast, ‘it is a cruel blow for this good father.’

‘At least,’ said Zechariah in a sad voice, ‘if he lose this child, he will still have several left him; while I’—

‘My poor friend,’ replied Eleazar; and he sank back in the car, giving himself up completely to the melancholy thoughts suggested to him by the grief

in which his friend was plunged, as well as his own particular sorrow.

The driver still stood near, awaiting fresh orders ; the porter continued staring at the travellers, and Jehoiakim rose, surprised that no one said a word.

Zipporah felt that this state of uncertainty could not last, but she knew not how to break the silence. At last, noticing that her father was too much overpowered to be able to act, she told Zechariah to let them be driven to some hostelry ; but she was obliged to repeat her request before he heard her, or paid any attention to what she was saying.

‘Happy Manasseh!’ exclaimed Zechariah, awakening as from a dream ; ‘he has still several children left. But who speaks of going to some hostelry ? Ah, certainly, we cannot sleep in the street. Driver, take us to the street Mercury ; there we shall find the best accommodation in Rome.’

The driver obeyed. When they arrived at the door of their new lodging,—a large and beautiful house, having a magnificent garden behind,—our travellers sent back their equipage, and took possession of the rooms they had selected.

All the remainder of that day they were very silent, for Eleazar was in no humour for talking.

He saw all his plans upset ; he had already failed in the principal aim he had in view when accepting the embassy ; and he trembled at the bare thought of taking back his daughter to Jerusalem—to a place that might from one day to another be subject to all the horrors of a siege. It is true he might leave her at Rome until peace was re-established in Palestine. But to whom should he dare confide so precious a deposit, now that the only friend he had counted on was gone ?

Zipporah's thoughts were not of a more agreeable kind. As she sat near the window, listening to the rolling of the vehicles, and following the movements of the population of this vast metropolis, she reflected that she had not a single friend, not a single acquaintance, among the many thousand individuals around her, and her heart felt oppressed at the thought of such loneliness. Sihor's predictions again recurred to her mind ; and as she had so far not been able to apply them to any of the dangers with which she had already met, she concluded that her greatest trials awaited her at Rome.

It was scarcely night when Pyttalus entered Eleazar's lodging. Having told him that he found

out his address from the porter at Manasseh's house, and that he had called to offer his services to show him everything he wished,—such were his patron's express wishes,—he added : ' I presume that, as you have come to ask so important a favour as the rupture of a solemn treaty, ratified by the Senate, your king has not sent you empty-handed. I mean to say that you are the bearer of presents suitable to induce my worthy and noble patron to serve you. It is an established custom with princes, and one from which it would be highly imprudent to deviate. Doubtless I may appear inquisitive, having known you so short a time, but I am so anxious that you should succeed in your mission, that I trust you will forgive me.'

Eleazar had no motive for dissimulation, and appeared affected by the friendly tone and the insinuating manners of the Greek ; so he informed him that he was entrusted with magnificent gifts, and Zechariah hastened to display to his admiring gaze the jewels committed to his care. At the sight of the earrings, rings, bracelets, necklaces, and precious stones composing these treasures, Pyttalus seemed in ecstasy, though he only saw them by the feeble light of a lamp. Having carefully examined

them, he began, with every appearance of the greatest disinterestedness, to point out to the Hebrews the danger they ran of damaging their cause if they were not particular in the manner of offering these splendid gifts to the triumvir.

‘Not only,’ said he, ‘my illustrious patron’s delicacy would be wounded if he appeared to accept a direct present for his services, but his enemies and his rival’s partisans would not fail, learning of this circumstance, to publish everywhere that Antony had allowed himself to be corrupted; and, of course, this would make all your proceedings, all your efforts, fruitless. Allow me, then, to undertake this part of your negotiation, by no means the least difficult part. Give me a list of your jewels; I will expatiate on their beauty and richness to my master, and will receive his orders as to when and how it will please him to accept this tribute of respect and friendship from your king.’

As Eleazar knew full well that an embassy like his, and under such critical circumstances, required the most secret as well as the greatest precautions, he recognised the wisdom of Pyttalus’ advice, and did as he desired.

Thus partly relieved from his anxiety, he retired

to rest as soon as the Greek had left ; and as his companions were all as tired as he was, they followed his example, and very soon balmy sleep made them forget their grief at not being lodged in the house of their worthy compatriot Manasseh.





CHAPTER XIX.

OCTAVIA, WIFE OF MARC ANTONY.



ON entering Rome, our travellers had only been struck by the beauty of the public buildings. This illusion was dispelled on the morrow, when, having provided themselves with a guide, they walked about the city. Almost all the houses seemed poor and mean, in comparison with what they had pictured to themselves. They found the greater part of the streets narrow and muddy, and the height of the wooden buildings, whose shelving roofs were covered with tiles, almost shut out the light of day.

The habitations, or, to speak more correctly, the cabins of the artisans and slaves, contrasting with the magnificent palaces of the great, annoyed their eyes. Everything in this proud city spoke,

at the same moment, of opulence and misery, of greatness and meanness, of oppression and slavery. For Rome was no longer what she had been : love of country had given place to sordid cupidity, and each one thought only of enriching himself at the expense of others.

As our readers are doubtless well acquainted with the most celebrated Roman edifices of this period, we will not accompany the Israelites on their walk. Zechariah had asked their guide to avoid taking them into any temple, for fear his relation might be carried away by his righteous indignation ; besides, they would not have found time to visit even a small part of the four hundred and twenty temples that Rome then contained within its walls.

The entire morning scarcely sufficed them to examine the Forum properly,—a large number of irregular buildings in the shape of an oblong square, which they could safely show Eleazar without his discovering what he called ‘abominations.’ There was the rostrum, where the tribunes of the people and the public orators had delivered their most celebrated harangues ; the different courts of justice, the most beautiful shops, the best-provisioned markets ; open walks where the idle congregated ;

others, less frequented, where philosophers who did not wish to be interrupted in their meditations found a tranquil resort.

In the afternoon, Eleazar, persuaded by Zechariah, was induced to go to the Campus Martius to see a review; and Zipporah, who had begged them to leave her at home with Jehoiakim, received a visit from Maia, who had been deputed by Octavia to present the young Jewish maiden to her, as she much wished to see her. Maia belonged to a family of distinction, but her reputation was far from irreproachable. Public rumour said that Antony had placed her near his wife to play the part of spy on her actions.

As to Octavia's reputation, calumny had never dared attack it. Illustrious by birth, the great-niece of Julius Cæsar, and sister to Augustus, she was still more so by her virtues and her attachment to Marc Antony, in spite of the numerous insults and provocations of this unworthy husband. Antony's gross mind was incapable of appreciating so noble a character; so he suspected that she would take part in his brother-in-law's intrigues against him, and had charged Maia to watch her proceedings.

Zipporah dared not accept Octavia's invitation without consulting her father; fortunately, he and Zechariah came home just then.

'Go, my child, without hesitating a moment; the honour of being presented to Octavia is far too great not to be accepted with eagerness.'

As Zipporah explained to him that she had no suitable clothing to go in, he said: 'Do not allow that to disturb thee, my daughter; why should we not justly be proud of our Hebrew costume, the most ancient and the most fit of all those I have seen so far? Besides, it would not be right that, even at Rome, a daughter of Jerusalem should forget her native land. Thou hast no motive, like Esther, to conceal that thou art a Jewess, and I am no Mordecai to give thee any such advice.'

Zipporah's obedience to her father's wishes had always been prompt and implicit. Without any objection she got into the car with Maia, which had been waiting at the door, and they set off.

On their road they met priests of Cybele, dancing, fully armed, uttering cries like madmen, accompanied by the confused noise of tambourines and cymbals. Zipporah asked who these singular men were.

‘Oh! do not call them men; they are odious and disgusting beings,’ replied Maia. ‘See! there is Phillyra, the dancer, passing in her gilded car. She will not turn aside even to let the Vestal Virgins pass, though everybody is obliged to make room for them. But there are the lictors making her horses draw back.’

When the dancer and her brilliant equipage had drawn aside, the superb car of the Vestal Virgins, drawn by four white horses, preceded by lictors with their fasces, and followed by a crowd of slaves, passed by majestically, and Maia’s carriage was able to proceed to Antony’s dwelling.

Maia and the young Jewish maiden were introduced into Octavia’s apartments by a private entrance. She was standing near a superb candelabrum, passing an amber ball from one hand to the other, and talking with several ladies. This amber ball was a sort of toy then much in vogue, and said to possess refreshing qualities. Octavia’s long robe, edged with golden and purple tissue, borne by ladies, was open in front, to display the rich set of precious stones decorating her bosom; and a light mantle, fastened with a choice clasp, fell gracefully around her beautiful shoulders.



Octavia received the youthful Jewess with sweet affability.

Octavia received the youthful Jewess with sweet affability, joined to an air of nobility and dignity that would have done honour to a Roman matron in the greatest days of the republic; and Zipporah, noticing the loveliness of her personal charms, the gentleness of her manners, and the majesty of her deportment, was unable to comprehend how her husband could be guilty of coolness to her.

Octavia conversed some minutes with her; then, leaving her to receive other visits, she presented her with some ivory tickets. 'I hope,' added she, 'that you will give me the pleasure of joining me the day after to-morrow at the amphitheatre, where my husband intends giving the people a grand spectacle of wild beasts. These tickets will admit you and your friends.'

Zipporah was on the point of replying that the Hebrews never attended such sights, but she trembled and uttered a cry of alarm, at seeing a small serpent creeping in and out of the bosom of one of the ladies in the room with them. They told her this was a tame serpent, and that many ladies had them on their persons because they imparted coolness to the skin; and to reassure

her, the lady took the reptile into her hands, called it her jewel, her dear little snake, kissed it affectionately, and put it back into her clothes.

When Maia had walked with her young friend all round the circle of ladies, she said :

‘Let us now sit down, and I will tell you the names of the principal persons forming our society. There you see two children: one is the son of Octavia by Marcellus, her first husband; the other is that belonging to Antony by his first wife, Fulvia; it would be impossible to say which of the two she loves with the most tenderness. This beautiful tall woman is Hortensia, who, when the triumvirs wished to strip the Roman ladies of half their goods, in concert with Octavia obliged them to forego their intention. But let us retire; we will not wait for this everlasting chatterbox who is coming this way. When once her tongue is let loose, it would certainly be easier to stop the flow of the Tiber than her words.’

Zipporah feared great talkers, so she was as pleased as Maia to return home. On entering, she gave her father the ivory tickets.

‘God preserve us from witnessing this cruel amusement!’ said Eleazar. ‘We must send back

these tickets, and explain our motives for not accepting the invitation.'

'You make a mistake, Rabbi Eleazar,' said Zechariah, 'if you think this relates to a fight with gladiators; it is only a simple fight with beasts, and no part of the law forbids us to take part in such sights.'

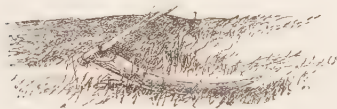
'Perhaps not, if we merely look at the letter of the law; but it is forbidden everywhere if we consider the spirit of the law. Whatever the Pharisees may say, humanity to animals is one of the characteristic traits of the law. Does not Moses command us to succour the beast of burden when we see it failing under its load? to allow our flocks and herds to enjoy the rest of the Sabbath day? to grant the birds of the air and the animals of the plain the benefits of the sabbatical year, in permitting them to feed on the spontaneous fruits of the earth?'

'These are not harmless beasts, still less domestic animals, which, having been created for the use of man, have also right to his protection; they are wild beasts, that man is authorized to destroy. But, granted all that you have said, I think that your duty to your native country forbids you to run the

risk of offending Antony by refusing his wife's invitation. The welfare of Jerusalem is the first consideration, and one to which everything ought to give way ; and I cannot but believe that you will be guilty in the eyes of the Lord, if you let your zeal compromise the interests of your people.'

This last argument seemed to have some weight with Eleazar. Looking down, he walked backwards and forwards, as was his usual way whenever he hesitated what to do.

'I will think about it,' he said ; 'the games will not take place until the day after to-morrow, and to-morrow is the day that we are to be presented to Marc Antony. We shall find out whether there is any chance of our being able to escape this disgraceful sight.'





CHAPTER XX.

THE DIPLOMATIC AUDIENCE.

THE next morning, at an early hour, Eleazar and his kinsman, provided with their credentials, went to wait upon Marc Antony. On their way they met Pyttalus, who came to meet them, begging them to hasten.

‘It is of great consequence not to arrive too late,’ said he, ‘for you are not the only ones waiting for favours. Already the streets are full of devotees come to offer their homage to the gods; of ambitious men, who pay court to their patrons or their protectors. The proscriptions and the massacres of the last civil war are still too fresh to allow us to forget them; it is even to be feared that they may be renewed, and perhaps this is the reason why each one is anxious to secure the good graces of some powerful man, either by flattery or presents.’

‘Sad city,’ murmured Eleazar to himself, ‘where the only safeguard for innocence must be meanness and corruption! And I, who hoped to bring my daughter to an inviolable sanctuary! Woe, woe to the earth, if there is not a single corner where the feeble and defenceless being can find a place of safety!’

Whilst he continued to walk in mournful silence, Zechariah told Pyttalus of the objections made by his kinsman, the preceding evening, against the games to which Octavia had invited them.

‘It is a frivolous and ill-timed scruple,’ said the Greek, addressing Eleazar. ‘Your refusal would be considered a gross insult, and with a man of a blunt character, like my noble patron, it would preclude all further negotiations. Besides, this is not to be an ordinary spectacle; it is far less a fight between animals than it is between Antony and Octavius. At this time both of them are courting the favour of the people, and have lately assembled their friends in the circus. Antony gives this entertainment, and has invited his rival. As for the other guests, accepting the ivory tickets is a silent avowal that they embrace his cause. If, then, you insulted him by returning the tickets

after having accepted them, it would be quite as well for you to leave Rome at once ; for Antony renders willing service to his friends, but is hard and inflexible to his enemies.'

Eleazar said not a word. A stifled sob proved that, if he gave way, it was certainly not because they had convinced him. At length they reached the triumvir's palace. Having passed through the court, already filled with petitioners and clients, they entered the hall (*atrium*) by splendid brazen gates. The roof, supported on Ionic columns, had a large opening in the centre, where the rain fell through, and was received in a richly gilded basin, behind which was seen the altar to the household god. On the right and left were cabinets, the entrance to which was closed by curtains. It was still early, but the hall was crowded by a number of quacks, musicians, parasites, jesters, and courtesans. In the midst of this clamorous multitude were priests of Isis and Cybele, who were rarely wanting at all kinds of meetings. Many of these last had no sooner perceived Pyttalus, than they ran after him, begging his good offices ; and some of them, not trusting merely to the seduction of their words, slipped costly gifts into his hand ; but while giving

them a nod of good understanding between them, he left them without a word, and, opening a door to the right, introduced the Israelites into a small room, a kind of arsenal, or rather a war-museum.

There they saw the arms taken by Antony from the enemies he had subdued in various parts of the world. Amidst the long javelins of the Egyptians, the bows and arrows of the Parthians, the Hebrews noticed with grief the lances and swords of their own beloved land. These were the spoils of Aristobulus' army, who, after having excited the Jews to revolt, had been overcome by the Romans under Antony's command.

Pyttalus had left them; he now returned with the triumvir, who saluted the foreigners with a gracious air, seated himself, and signified that they should do the same. He no longer wore the bushy beard, as on the day when he represented Hercules. Eleazar could examine his countenance all the more. On his proud and masculine features were plainly depicted the effects of intemperance and all sorts of excesses, and the expression of a fierce and dogged will, which seemed to say: 'I rush to my destruction; I am well aware of it, but I persist, and I defy fate.'

Eleazar presented his credentials. Antony scarcely looked at them. Placing them on a table, he said: 'Doubtless you know that a decree of the Senate has nominated Herod King of the Jews, and that he has left to take possession of his crown.'

Eleazar replied: 'When the members of the Senate issued their decree, it was probably unknown to them that Antigonus was then master of Jerusalem; that all the country had recognised him; and that, in order to strengthen Herod's pretensions, it would be necessary to undertake a long and difficult war,—a war of which it would be impossible to foretell the result.'

'There is only one result possible for the wars undertaken by the Romans,' answered Antony with haughtiness.

'But if I demonstrate that it is their interest, and especially yours, to maintain peace with our master?'

'Oh, in that case you may look upon the decree of the Senate as null and void, and on Antigonus and me as sworn friends. None of your pretenders have any right to the crown, for Hyrcanus, your ancient king, still lives among the Parthians.'

'Since he has been mutilated, he can no longer fulfil the functions of high priest.'

‘Yes, since Antigonus had his ears cut off, or rather tore them off himself with his teeth, if I mistake not, in order to put it out of his power to hurt him. But in this case the crown rightly belongs to the Romans ; they have the disposal of it.’

‘Yes ; or to speak more correctly, it belongs to you, for in dividing the empire, Syria and all the East fell to your share.’

Antony felt resolved to break with Octavius, and did not consider it at all unlikely that the contest would be decided on the plains of Asia. He was sensible that so warlike a nation as the Jews might be of great help to him ; and beginning to doubt that his friend Herod, who was only a king in name, would prove as useful an ally as Antigonus, who was actually a king, he inquired of Eleazar how many troops Jerusalem could furnish if he really acknowledged Antigonus.

Eleazar confessed that he was quite unprepared to answer that question.

‘What!’ exclaimed Antony, in an impatient tone of voice ; ‘that is precisely the only thing that I want to know. Might is the only right of princes ; reason ought to be on the side of him who has the largest army.’

‘But what I can assure you on my master’s part is, that he will uphold Marc Antony with all the forces of his kingdom.’

Not willing to settle definitely with respect to the Hebrews’ embassy, in order that he might be guided by circumstances, and pre-occupied with his designs on Zipporah, the triumvir merely told Eleazar that he felt the power of his arguments, but he required some days to consider it all very carefully before submitting to the wish expressed by Antigonus. He then asked for Zipporah, but with such apparent unconcern as completely to deceive Eleazar as to the motive of the interest he took in his daughter.

At last he recalled Pyttalus, whom he had sent out of the room, and inquired if there were many persons waiting for him.

‘Yes,’ replied the Greek; ‘there are even some distinguished persons who beg the favour of a short interview.’

‘If a short interview would be a favour,’ said Antony, ‘how will it be if I grant none at all? There, worthy sophist, is a problem to resolve in awaiting my return.’

So saying, he bowed to the Hebrews; and going

out by a private door, he left his clients biting their lips in the court and the hall, until they heard that the one they had waited for from the dawn of day had secretly escaped.

When they had left the palace, Eleazar said: 'If the triumvir would grant me the same attention in spiritual matters as he has graciously accorded me in the affairs of our embassy, I might perhaps be able to make a proselyte of him. The Lord vouchsafe him His grace!'

Entering their lodgings, he hastened to tell his daughter of the happy issue of this their first conference, and spoke of the hope it gave him for the future.

Zipporah showed him a letter that she had just received. This letter was from Paulina to Eleazar, and among other news contained the following:—

'It is not right to listen at doors, but when God allows an inquisitive person thus to become aware of the projects of our enemies, it appears to me that it is right to profit by this curiosity. The very day of your departure, Esther, one of your servants, heard these words from Oreb's own mouth, when he was conversing with your wife:

"Eleazar," so said this hypocrite, "has been

determined to take his daughter with him, but he will not take her far. This very evening, men placed in ambush by me will frighten Zipporah so much that she will not dare follow her father to Rome ; and if Eleazar should persist in his intention, he will be obliged to give it up later. I have got some one to write and tell Manasseh that his daughter, who is married at Tyre, is dangerously ill, and that she wishes to see him and all his family before dying. Thus, when your husband arrives at Rome, he will find no one to whom to confide the treasure he has snatched from your hands, and that I have wished to possess for a long time.”

Eleazar smote his forehead with an expression of sorrow. He was less astonished than grieved at what he had just heard, for he knew quite enough of his wife's ambition, and the hypocritical virtue of Oreb the Pharisee, to believe them capable of concocting so odious a plot. He carefully avoided showing this part of the letter to Zipporah, and she contented herself with reading what was especially addressed to herself.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE COMBATS AT THE CIRCUS.

HLEAZAR, his daughter, and Zechariah were probably the only people throughout the city of Rome who did not anticipate the day of the grand sight at the circus with unfeigned pleasure; it was a day of feasting and of joy for the entire population. It required fresh entreaties on the part of Pyttalus and Maia, who were deputed to conduct them to the games, to induce them to follow the multitude. On this occasion persons of distinction had displayed all the luxury of their clothing, and the poorest had left off the brown tunic to put on a white one. Several had sent to retain their places during the night, or at the dawn of day; and the canvassers were so numerous, that the *locarii*, whose office was similar to our box-openers, would have lost

patience unless they had been pacified by some gratuity.

It was through this crowd that the Hebrews arrived at the amphitheatre, a vast and superb building, constructed of freestone, with several arcades, each destined for a quarter of the city, in order to avoid all confusion. Having traversed these arcades, they entered a succession of passages called the 'Labyrinth,' where Maia pointed out the staircase leading to the 'Libitina Gate,' designed for taking out wounded or slain gladiators. The tone of lightness and carelessness with which she gave these details greatly added to the horror that Zipporah felt at the sight of these places.

As the seats reserved for ambassadors were in the 'Podium,'—the first rank of seats was so called,—they had not to go far before reaching them, and almost immediately they entered the open enclosure of this roofless but immense edifice. Its extent and magnificence, those mountains of human heads piled as it were on one another, all those eyes, in which were depicted the most eager expectation, produced an electric effect on our friends. They remained half stupified for some moments, and it was only after the first impression had worn off

that they could examine the sight before them. All the statues, the columns, and the altars had been removed from the centre of the arena, and nothing obstructed the spectators' view. The openings of the caves containing the wild beasts were plainly seen, and the people might come and gaze at them, and go into raptures, behind the grating separating them from the arena.

These gratings protected the spectators from the ferocious quadrupeds, but not always from savage bipeds. One day, Caligula, seeing that there were no more criminals left to throw to the wild beasts, sent to seize a dozen or two of the unfortunate people behind the gratings, and had them thrown into the arena,—an imperial joke which no doubt amused his worthy courtiers.

All the ambassadors, the dignitaries of the empire, consuls, prætors, senators, the principal priests, and the Flamens sat on the first benches; their seats, forming an immense circle around the arena, were of Parian or African marble, covered with rich cushions. In a distinct gallery, and situated on the same line, were seen the Vestal Virgins, clad in their long white robes. The benches of the knights were placed just above;

then all the remaining spectators, confusedly crammed together at the very top of the edifice.

‘How small these Romans look to me here,’ said Eleazar to his daughter,—‘these Romans that everywhere else appear so grand! I no longer look upon them as men, but beasts more bloodthirsty than those that they are going to set to fight. They are not satisfied with carrying war to the very extremity of the world, but they must even war against the beasts. Massacres and streams of blood seem necessary to them. Earth and sea, man and beast, are equally outraged by this destructive people. May Heaven deliver us from this scourge!’

Whilst Eleazar was saying these words, Zipporah had unconsciously fixed her eyes on an officer at a short distance from them. He seemed to regard them with interest, but likewise with a timid and respectful air. His costume showed him to be a centurion, evidently about fifty years of age; his regular features, bronzed by the sun, spoke of melancholy, and his bearing betrayed a pensive, dreamy mind; for now he turned his back to the arena, then looked up at the sky, as though insensible to all around him, or else

he fixed his black eyes on Zipporah, when he fancied he could do it without being noticed.

Suddenly the sound of trumpets re-echoed through the building, and at the same moment Antony entered, followed by a numerous train of devoted partisans. Immediately the whole assembly rose, and loud acclamations burst from all sides.

‘Any one would say that these walls are going to fall,’ said Eleazar, alarmed at the noise, and turning to his daughter; ‘that would not astonish me. We never ought to have come here, for fear of being buried like Samson under the walls of the Philistines. Come near, my child—nearer, nearer still. Should judgment descend on these heathen, we cannot expect to be spared, Hebrews as we are; but at least we will die together, and praying the Lord to forgive us.’

During this interval, Octavius, accompanied by a host of friends, also entered the amphitheatre, on the opposite side to where Antony was seated, and he advanced to the front seats; but his arrival was only greeted by a few isolated cheers. This silence seemed to several of the older and more thoughtful citizens to augur badly for his cause; they imagined they saw a fresh motive for enmity

between these two men, and certain signs of the war they would undertake against each other, and which would inundate the territory of Rome with a perfect deluge of blood.

To amuse the people, they had prefaced the games by a fight between a wolf and a wild boar ; but at a signal from Antony, those who had paid no attention to this sight resumed their places, and all looks were fixed on the arena. A universal cry of admiration and surprise greeted the first combatant, an enormous elephant. Gently inclining his head, the animal, having previously had a large quantity of mulberry wine given it to drink, in order to excite it, made its appearance in the arena, and walked round it with as majestic a step as if it had been wandering through the forests of Asia.

Then another door was opened, and out came a rhinoceros of gigantic size, uttering a terrible cry, as though it would defy every adversary that dared come near ; but no sooner had it noticed the elephant, than it stopped, then drew back, its head down, and retired to the farthest extremity of the arena.

The elephant also stopped ; but having looked at its enemy for some time with a calm air, it resumed

its walk with the same majestic steps. As it approached the rhinoceros each time in making the circuit of the arena, the latter never failed to avoid the fight by fleeing to the other end; and they continued this by-play until the people, becoming impatient, asked that some gladiators might enter and force them to the combat.

A tiger was entrusted with this part. Rushing into the midst of the arena, and opening its inflamed jaws, a roar was heard enough to frighten all the beholders if they had not been used to this sort of spectacle; then, jumping on the elephant's back, it cleared the course with one bound, then over the nets and palisades separating the first benches of the arena, and remained fixed on the iron spikes immediately opposite the spot where Zipporah was sitting. As it continued to struggle, roaring most fearfully, and threatening to seize Eleazar's daughter with its claws (she and her companions were stupified with fright), the officer who had previously noticed the young Jewess came near quickly, drew his sword, and finished the furious animal.

'Come, my child,' said Eleazar, when he had recovered a little from his terror, 'let us leave this wretched place.'

‘My dear friend,’ said Maia, taking Zipporah by the arm, ‘you cannot think of going away so soon; the games are only just beginning. Besides, the passages are crowded by the mob. Stop, I pray; there is not the least danger now the tiger is killed.’

‘No, do not remain a moment longer,’ exclaimed Zipporah’s deliverer; ‘you are too much overcome; these sights were not made for you. I will be your guide, and conduct you out of the amphitheatre without any difficulty.’

‘We most gratefully accept your offer,’ said Eleazar to the officer. ‘Show us the way, we are quite ready to follow you.’

Placing his daughter between himself and Zechariah, he followed his guide through the crowded passages which divided the various rows of seats. By this means they arrived at one of the principal *comitories*, or doors of the theatre, by which the crowd was let out, and found themselves in the street.

Entering their lodging, they again thanked the officer, who had accompanied them as far as the door; and he, after having asked for permission to see them again the next day, bowed to them and retired.



CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRIUMVIR.

AS soon as the Hebrews were alone, Eleazar called for the master of the house, and inquired if he knew this officer who had just left them.

‘Doubtless,’ said the landlord; ‘it is Valens, a centurion in the Campagnian Legion. He has already gained a mural crown for being the first to scale the rampart of a fortress they were besieging; but they reproach him with being too lavish with his own life, and too sparing with that of others. This is looked upon as a blemish in an officer. They would prefer to see him less mournful and less silent, and that he should not grow pale for days together over the writings of the philosophers. *Stoic*, he refuses himself every gratification, though

he has everything to make a man happy,—rank, glory, an illustrious origin, a considerable fortune. But what causes this sad melancholy is more than I can tell you.’

An old man, who lived in the same house, finished drawing Valens’ character, which the landlord had only sketched.

From his very infancy he had been taught by his father, that Rome’s aggrandizement and military glory were the most noble springs of ambition for a Roman ; so he entered with eagerness the career open before him, and would very soon have eclipsed all his rivals. However, he became disgusted with the scenes of carnage in which he was obliged to take part, and which agreed so little with his character, naturally pacific and generous. And neither the example nor the sarcasm of his comrades could prevent him from showing himself as humane as brave, even in the midst of a conflict.

The sight of the cruelty that he was unable to prevent was not, however, the sole cause of the melancholy with which they reproached him. Surrounded by debauchees, he was disgusted with the disgraceful pleasures held out to him, and ended by rejecting all the fables of polytheism. But he

differed from the greater part of the heathen, who abandoned this worship to the ignorant ; like them, he could not satisfy himself by walking in the darkness of complete unbelief, nor rest on the doctrine of blind necessity.

‘ If I had been born to-day with all my faculties,’ he said once to an Epicurean,—‘ if I found them as perfect as they are at this present moment, and then saw myself suddenly transported from the midst of darkness into a magnificent and wonderfully illuminated palace, might I not experience the wish to know him who constructed the beautiful building? And because I have been introduced into this brilliant wonder of a world, which one mind has evidently planned, and over which one Being presides ; shall I not feel a desire to become acquainted with the character of this Deity, and try to explain the mysteries by which I am daily surrounded? You tell me to taste the joys of the palace where I am, without asking whence they come. That is what I cannot do ; I cannot resign myself to pass through the scene of life, like a silent actor in some theatrical procession, without trying to find why I form part of the band, who is the ordainer of the imposing spectacle in which

I play a part, and finally, where I am to go when this part is finished.'

Such were the doubts that pursued Valens, and his dejected spirit resembled a vine without support, seeking on all sides for a branch to which to cling.

Whilst Eleazar and his friends were chatting over what they had just heard, they all at once saw Maia coming in.

'Oh, my dear Zipporah,' said she, 'you cannot imagine all you have lost by leaving us so hastily! That stupid rhinoceros, after having twice been thrown to the ground, at length became furious. It rushed on the elephant, and ripped up its bowels with its horn; and observe that, in the people's eyes, the rhinoceros represented Octavius, as the elephant represented Antony. What a singular omen for these two rivals! Then we had a general battle, with lions, tigers, bears, wolves, and crocodiles. It was indeed an uproar and frightful roaring; in no time the arena was covered with wounded animals, still panting and roaring.'

Maia was expatiating with evident satisfaction on this scene of carnage, so disagreeable to Zipporah's

ears, when she was interrupted by the arrival of Marc Antony. Immediately she made her escape by a private door, whilst the triumvir entered by the other.

Although the honour of this visit seemed to be addressed to the ambassador, Antony's looks and manners plainly showed that Zipporah was the chief object. After having assured the Jewish maiden that he was grieved at the alarm she had felt at the circus, he drew forth a small box from under his mantle, and, turning to Eleazar's daughter, said : 'I have noticed that you do not wear bracelets ; allow me to fasten these on your arms.'

As he was taking them out of the box, Zipporah looked at her father, who made her a signal that she might accept his gift. Without waiting for her permission or Eleazar's, Marc Antony fastened on one of the bracelets, holding her hand as if to see whether it suited, at the same time looking at her so boldly, that the poor child blushed with confusion and anger. However, she concealed her indignation, for fear of offending a man who could exert such great influence over the destinies of Jerusalem. To her immense relief, Antony, having fastened the second bracelet, let go her hand, and,

seating himself beside her, began to converse with Eleazar.

When he willed it, the triumvir's manners were noble and polite, and his eloquence yielded with astonishing facility to all circumstances,—gross, when he was in the midst of his debauched companions; insinuating, when he harangued the people; amiable, when he wished to shine in select society. On this occasion he neglected nothing to conciliate Eleazar and Zechariah, who, altogether occupied with their great political interests, had not noticed the looks so displeasing to Zipporah.

Having expressed the hope that he would very soon have something favourable to communicate on the object of their mission, he bade them farewell; and the Hebrews, highly delighted with him, were most eloquent in his praise. Zipporah alone was silent; she did not wish to tell her father of the fears that tormented her.

In order to hide her trouble, she retired early; and notwithstanding the admiration that Zechariah had shown when examining the bracelets, she threw them away from her, quite resolved never to wear them, unless, indeed, her father gave her express orders.

Scarcely had she gone out of the room, than a special messenger arrived from the triumvir to beg Eleazar to go that same evening to the palace. Eleazar, still excited by the fine prospect he had caught a glimpse of, hastened to accept the invitation.

‘Forgive me,’ so said Antony, ‘if I have asked you to come; but I have received important despatches, which cannot fail to be agreeable to you, and I am anxious for you to see them at once.’

After having conversed some time on the subject of these letters, all at once he interrupted him by asking this blunt question: ‘Did you not tell me that your king had agreed to give up to the Parthians, besides considerable sums of money, five hundred Jewish slaves?’

‘Yes, this is in effect one of the articles of the treaty; but as it cannot be accomplished, they have given it up, and the King pays another sum of money.’

‘What would Antigonus say if I offered your nation an alliance, offensive and defensive, for a single woman, whom I would place in the most illustrious rank, by raising her to the dignity of my wife,—for your daughter, the beautiful Zipporah?’

‘Have I heard distinctly?’ exclaimed Eleazar, rising hastily from his chair, and approaching Antony so closely that his beard touched his face. ‘Infamous idolater! do you think my child a Delilah? Do you think that the daughters of the Holy City resemble those of Chaldea? And am I a father like Manasseh, to offer’—

‘Calm yourself,’ replied Antony coldly, seeing that Eleazar warmed as he spoke; ‘I had heard that the Hebrews could not understand a joke, and I merely wished to make the trial. You have taken a simple joke in earnest.’

‘I will not retract the words that a holy wrath has inspired me with,’ said Eleazar, in a calmer voice, but still trembling from deep emotion; ‘I will, however, retire, that I may obey Solomon’s precept: “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.”’

‘One moment—you must not quit us in anger. You have said things to me that I would never forgive a Roman; I pardon you, because you do not know our customs. I see that it is still more dangerous to joke with a priest of the Hebrews than to touch the beard of Jupiter Capitolinus.

Come ; no malignity ! I have demanded a truce, let it be turned to peace ; and the better to dispose you to this compact of friendship, I will tell you that, judging from appearances, I shall very soon be able to satisfy you respecting your mission. To-morrow we shall see each other again ; I hope then to be able to give you a definite answer, and leave you at liberty to return when you please to your own country.'

It was by mild and insinuating words that the triumvir succeeded at length in calming Eleazar's wrath, or at least in making him dissemble it. Zipporah's father felt how imprudent it would be to quarrel any longer, especially as the fortunate success of his embassy would allow him to leave Rome at once, and remove his daughter from Antony's power.

So, returning home, he sought Zipporah, who confessed to her father all the anxiety she felt ; but he seemed not to be concerned at it, which astonished her not a little.

'My child,' said Eleazar, 'what thou canst not understand to-day, thou wilt comprehend later. Meantime, let us beseech the Lord to watch over thee.'



CHAPTER XXIII.

DANGERS AND DEVOTION.

SEVERAL weeks passed by without the negotiation making much progress. Antony dared not as yet come to a rupture with his rival, but was in such an irresolute state of mind that he could not decide on what line of policy he had best adopt towards Antigonus.

But neither important state interests, nor the approach of events on which depended his glory and perhaps his life, could make him forget Zipporah. The calm and severe dignity with which the young Jewish maiden repulsed his advances made him pretty certain that the only chance of succeeding in his criminal intentions was by using violence ; but first of all he meant to try cunning.

Being aware of the well-known patriotism of the Hebrews, it occurred to him that perhaps he might be able to overcome Zipporah's scruples by

assuring her that the fate of her beloved Jerusalem depended upon her decision ; so one day he went to the lodgings occupied by Eleazar, and, as it chanced, he found Zipporah entirely alone. Approaching her with a respectful air, he said, in a persuasive tone of voice :

‘One of your compatriots residing at Rome has related to me, out of your sacred books, that Ahasuerus, king of the Persians, having divorced Vashti his wife, a young girl of your nation, no less remarkable for her devotion than her beauty (her name was Esther, if I mistake not), aspired to the honour of espousing this monarch, in spite of the difference of their religion, in the hope of being useful to her brethren, who at that epoch were in frightful slavery. She achieved her purpose, married Ahasuerus, and when an edict commanded the extermination of the Jews, her kinsman Mordecai implored her to intercede in their favour, by making her understand that it was doubtless for this express purpose that God had raised her to the highest rank. She fulfilled this duty at the risk of her own life, and her intercession was crowned with the greatest success, for she saved her people from certain death. Is not this account the true one?’

Zipporah replied that it was true the sacred writings related this history.

‘Now listen to me,’ said the triumvir. ‘Your nation is in still greater danger. It is threatened with civil war, with a war of extermination; for, from the last news, Herod’s army already is devastating the whole of the country, and very soon it will besiege Jerusalem. The almighty power of the Romans can alone arrest this scourge; and I, who rule the people, I alone am the sole arbiter of the destinies of the East. If I agreed to repulse Herod from your territory, to spread the buckler of invincible Rome over the Holy City, and maintain peace, happiness, and prosperity in Palestine—in a word, if, like Ahasuerus, I saved your native land, should I find in you, beautiful Zipporah, a new Esther? or could you, without failing in what you owe God and your country, persist in driving me to desperation by your refusal? But wherefore this angry look? It is true that I am married; but as Ahasuerus divorced Vashti to espouse the heroic and pious Esther, I can also divorce Octavia to marry the adorable Zipporah.’

For some time Zipporah remained silent with surprise and indignation; but she restrained her-

self, by the same reasons as had decided Eleazar to master his just wrath. She felt the terrible responsibility to which Antony had alluded; and, aware of the favourable turn that the negotiation had taken, she feared to compromise its success by showing what she thought. So, making a great effort, she said with cold disdain: 'Your proposal proves that you do not know the daughters of Jerusalem. You are wrong to quote Esther's example. It was not to espouse Esther that Ahasuerus divorced Vashti. Vashti was already divorced when this monarch espoused Mordecai's niece.'

She dared not trust herself to say more; but the look of contempt accompanying these words did not escape Antony.

'Oh, well,' said he to himself, 'I will make this young barbarian see that no one despises me without danger. Let her tremble! If her heart will not bend, I will break it.'

And he went quickly out of the house, as though he longed to execute his projects of revenge. Truly, he was but little accustomed to find obstacles to his wishes; and whenever any did occur, the opposition only served to inflame his desires, wounded pride seconding his obstinate efforts.

At first, Zipporah resolved to tell her father immediately he returned home ; but on thinking it over, she decided to conceal her troubles from him for the next four-and-twenty hours. Eleazar had told her that he hoped to have his last interview with Antony on the morrow, and that everything promised a favourable result. Pyttalus had been with Eleazar in the morning, and, declaring that his patron thought himself authorized to accept Antigonus' splendid gifts, he had taken them away with him. The anxiety tormenting Zipporah continuing into the night, she rose, wrapped herself in her mantle, and seated herself near a window looking over the garden.

It was past midnight, and all around was gloomy and silent. The moon, glittering in a cloudless sky, illumined the trees with a whitish light, and was reflected on the roofs of the houses, and some statues placed on a terrace, looking like sentinels at their post. Not a leaf showed the slightest motion.

Such profound stillness in the midst of dwellings packed so closely together created in Zipporah's agitated mind a vague feeling of solitude, as though she found herself in a city of the dead ; but she comforted herself by thinking, that if all the world

slept, the Lord watched over her, and the appropriate words of the Psalmist reassured her: 'Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul.'

These meditations, however, soon gave room to surprise and fear; for suddenly she saw a young man come out from among the trees, and approach the house very cautiously. As soon as he came under the window where Zipporah was sitting, he raised his head; and on seeing her, he signified that the roll of papers he was then placing near the foot of the wall was intended for her. He then disappeared amid the trees, and all was again silent.

For some time Zipporah hesitated; but at length curiosity triumphed over fear, and she went down the staircase as quietly as possible, entered the garden, and picked up the mysterious letter. When she returned to her room she tried to read it; but it was too dark to distinguish the writing, and she was obliged to wait until the day broke. She passed the remainder of the night in prayer; but

as soon as the day began to dawn, she unfastened the roll, and read as follows :—

‘I was obliged to quit Rome with my men the very day I expected to see you, madam, as well as your estimable father ; but I have not thought of you the less.

‘As I was not aware of the reason of my removal, I hoped that it would not last long enough to deprive me of the pleasure of paying my respects to you before you left Rome ; but to-day I know that it is very unlikely that I shall be recalled to the city for some time. You are threatened with great dangers. For a long while your enemy has been preparing traps, which he expects you to fall into easily. Flee, but flee at once, if you wish to escape his schemes. VALENS.’

This advice, so congenial to Zipporah’s secret forebodings, had the same effect on her as if she had received it from her guardian angel. Whilst she was lost in conjectures as to how the centurion had discovered what was plotting against her, an hour passed ; and when she ran to her father’s room to show him the letter, she found that he and Zechariah had left the house to wait upon Antony.



CHAPTER XXIV.

PATERNAL DESPAIR.

IT had been agreed that, when Eleazar and Zechariah had had their conference with the triumvir, they should go to see a splendid aqueduct, situated about three miles from Rome, and which passed through a deep valley over arches of prodigious height.

When they reached Antony's palace, they were astonished to hear that he had not come home since the evening of the day before. As some State affair might have obliged him to absent himself, they determined to begin by visiting the aqueduct. At the expiration of several hours, they returned to the city, and again presented themselves at Antony's palace, but with no better success. They went home in rather a bad temper, for they were wounded

at this breach of faith, which betokened want of proper respect for their dignity.

On their arrival, Zipporah did not come to meet them, as was her wont, and no one answered when Eleazar called her in a loud voice. He went to her room, and not finding her there, he walked up and down the passages, still calling her. At last he discovered Jehoiakim in a state of complete intoxication, holding in his hand a cup turned upside down.

‘Alas!’ exclaimed Eleazar, ‘he has committed the sin of drunkenness; the unfortunate man is quite drunk!’ Then taking the Levite’s robe and pulling it, ‘Unworthy Jehoiakim!’ said he, ‘where is my daughter? where is Zipporah?’ And receiving no reply, ‘We are losing our time with this wretched being,’ continued Eleazar; ‘let us shut him up, and we will question him when he has recovered his senses. Oh, Zechariah! my heart is overpowered with frightful presentiments.’

Zechariah told him that probably Zipporah was gone out with Maia, and that she would soon come home. But hours passed by, the day began to decline, and still she did not come.

No longer able to bear his anxiety, Eleazar and Zechariah went to Antony’s palace, and asked to

see Maia : she had not been with Zipporah all that day. Pyttalus also said that he could tell them nothing about her, adding that his patron had not yet returned from the country.

Night came on with no better result, though Zechariah had made inquiries from the inhabitants of the houses in the neighbouring streets. No one could give the least information about the sudden disappearance of the young girl.

‘Alas ! alas !’ exclaimed Eleazar, wringing his hands, ‘if my poor child be not restored to me, I shall only have to cry, with the wife of Phinehas : “That which was my glory has been taken from me ; I will lay me down on the ground and die.”’

Zechariah tried to console him.

‘Do not speak to me of consolation,’ exclaimed the unhappy father, thrusting back his kinsman. ‘My child ! my child ! give me back my Zipporah ! or I will only hear the voice crying in Ramah : “Lamentation and bitter weeping ; alas ! if I am bereaved of my Zipporah, I am bereaved !” But hush ! do I not hear a carriage stop at the door ? No ; it has gone on. It has passed far away from me, like my Zipporah, the well-beloved of my heart.’

So passed the night, without the most feeble gleam of hope cheering Eleazar's sorrowful heart for one moment.

At the dawn of day he went with Zechariah into the room where they had shut up the intoxicated Jehoiakim. Slumber had dispelled the fumes of wine, and the Levite was in a state to reply to their questions. But all he could remember was, that the preceding evening, whilst Zipporah was sewing in her room, a man, who called himself a Hebrew, had come to pay his respects to him as his compatriot, and asked him to taste some excellent wine from Scio, as he had brought a first-rate bottle of it expressly for him.

‘Not willing to be rude to him,’ so added the Levite, ‘I put my lips to the poisoned goblet, and the moment after everything seemed to turn round with me.’

‘It is a plot,’ cried Eleazar. ‘It was necessary to inebriate the guardian, to remove the trust committed to his care.’

No sooner had Jehoiakim understood that he was the dupe of an odious stratagem, than shame, repentance, and indignation took possession of him; he seized his sword, and offered to bring

back Zipporah, even were she fastened to Jupiter's altar.

'Woe to thee!' replied the desolate father; 'I had placed thee near her as a guardian, and thou hast allowed her to be taken away. Why dost thou now come to me, and offer me thy sword? Zipporah has fallen into the trap, and it is not thy arm that will release her.'

When the hour had come for the courts of justice to be open, Eleazar and his kinsman presented themselves before a magistrate, to make their deposition and ask advice. Not having received any satisfactory answer, they were returning home in greater despair than before, when a woman, who had noticed their grief, inquired the cause of it with so much interest, that Eleazar thought he might confide in her. Scarcely had he described his daughter, than this woman interrupted him to say, that she had seen her the evening before with a priest of Cybele, a friend of Marc Antony's.

'Of Marc Antony's?' repeated Eleazar. 'Ah, now we have it! Woman, I thank you.'

And leaving her hastily, he seized Zechariah's arm, and dragged him to the triumvir's palace. When there, he made use of such rude expressions,

and looked so threatening, that the frightened slave refused to open to him.

At the sight of his helplessness, Eleazar gave himself up to all the violence of his grief. Burning tears coursed down his cheeks; he threw himself on the ground, rolled in the dust, tore his garments, plucked out his beard and the hair of his head, and uttering mournful cries, he called for curses from Heaven on the ravisher of his child.

A passer-by, taking pity on his anguish, told him in a whisper, that if he wished to get justice, he ought to carry his complaint to the Roman Senate.

‘Let us go to the Senate! let us go to the Senate!’ exclaimed Eleazar, rising, his eyes animated by a fresh ray of hope; and he rushed through the streets to the palace where the senators were sitting.

Perhaps a more extraordinary apparition had never presented itself before this august assembly. Repulsing the guards, Eleazar dashed into the midst of the hall, his beard and hair in disorder, his garments torn, his face covered with dust, his eyes overflowing with tears.

‘Listen to me, Romans!’ exclaimed he; ‘for who knows which amongst you who have daughters may

not very soon feel the same gross insults, the same misfortunes, as I do? Marc Antony, he who has been chosen triumvir by yourselves, has carried off my child, a virgin of Israel, and I denounce him to you as a ravisher. You are the descendants of those same Romans who chased away the Tarquins for the rape of Lucretia, who abolished the decemvirs for the outrage on Virginia. Antony is no less infamous, no less guilty. I demand that he may be punished—that my daughter may be restored to me!’

This language struck the senators with sudden consternation, for the remembrance of the massacres recently committed by the triumvir made them fear so much to offend him in any way, that, without the stupor which paralyzed their tongues, they would all have risen up against so audacious an accusation; but no sooner had one of the consuls recovered, than he said in an angry voice :

‘Lictors, is it thus you fulfil your duty? Why have you allowed this madman to penetrate into our building? Cast him out into the street!’

‘We cannot receive any complaints against the illustrious Marc Antony,’ said one of the lictors to Eleazar, laying his hand on him; ‘he is abso-

lute master at Rome, and you can expect no redress.'

'Thou liest, miserable man!' exclaimed Eleazar; 'if I can expect no redress on earth, I shall none the less obtain it in heaven.'

And falling on his knees, in a loud voice he uttered this prayer in Hebrew: 'O God, who didst bring down Pharaoh's pride, listen to Thy servant! hear me for the love of Thy well-beloved Abraham, of Thy faithful Isaac, and of holy Israel. Have pity on my child; deliver her, I pray Thee, from the hand of her enemy. Let not the ravisher triumph in his iniquity. Strike him on his throne, and let all the earth tremble in learning Thy vengeance!'

Although they did not understand his words, a multitude of senators rose from their seats, calling out to the lictors to take away the barbarian, who had come to disturb them with such insolence.

'Cowards and vile slaves!' exclaimed Eleazar, as they dragged him out; 'degenerate Romans! may the malediction of a despairing father fall on your heads! May your proud city perish like the cursed cities of Canaan!'

His voice, which was already hoarse, suddenly became quite inaudible, and at the moment he

quitted the hall, he fell back insensible into Zechariah's arms. Some bystanders, moved with compassion, placed him in a carriage, and his kinsman seated himself beside him.

The motion gradually reanimated him, and he became calmer, allowing himself to be carried to his bed without saying a word.

The master of the house advised him to leave Rome at once, to avoid Marc Antony's vengeance, which never spared the life of those who fell into his power.

'No,' replied Eleazar; 'I will never quit these walls without my daughter. Let the wretch heap coals of fire on my head, let him tear my flesh off my bones—I will endure every torment, I will patiently await death; but never, no, never will I leave Rome without my Zipporah.'

Zechariah wished to teach him patience by reminding him of the patriarch Job, who showed such resignation in his bitterest trials.

'Peace, peace!' said the unhappy father. 'Do not speak to me, Zechariah; rather bring me dust and ashes, for here I will lie down and die.'

Seeing that his kinsman was too much overcome by grief to listen to him, Zechariah was silent, and

a melancholy silence, interrupted only from time to time by bitter groans, reigned through the room ; when all at once cries of joy rang through the passage, the door was violently opened, and Jehoiakim threw himself at Eleazar's feet, exclaiming, ' Here she is ! here she is !'





CHAPTER XXV.

THE ABDUCTION.

ALTHOUGH Antony was almost absolute master in the state of degradation in which Rome was at this epoch, and he could by an act of arbitrary power violate the most sacred laws, it was nevertheless decidedly his interest to preserve popularity at a time when an open rupture with his rival might make it necessary to him. He had therefore entrusted to a priest of Cybele, of well-known prudence and discretion, the important duty of removing the young Jewess as secretly as possible.

This agent of the triumvir's had entered Elcazar's dwelling with a Jew settled at Rome, whose part it was to intoxicate Jehoiakim. As soon as the Levite was incapable of knowing what passed around him,

the priest of Cybele presented himself in Zipporah's room, telling her that her father had been seized with a paralytic attack whilst examining the aqueduct, and that Zechariah implored her to come to him immediately, as he had had him carried to a house adjoining the temple.

Grief and anxiety so possessed Zipporah, that she could think of nothing but her father's danger. Besides, her loyal and ingenuous character would never have allowed her to suspect anything wrong, especially as Eleazar had already had several paralytic attacks; then she would never have imagined that a priest, even an idolatrous priest, could condescend to lying and treachery.

Without hesitating a moment, she hastily put on a travelling cloak, and left the house with her perfidious guide, addressing a fervent prayer to Heaven for her father's recovery.

As the neighbourhood was already full of vehicles and foot-passengers, they could easily enter a by-street without any one noticing them. There they got into the car awaiting them, and left the city.

The priest tried to compose, by kind and compassionate words, the troubled mind of his young

companion ; but these words were accompanied by a mocking laugh, which would not have failed to rouse the mistrust of an observer less preoccupied than Zipporah. However, when they had gone more than three miles, and she did not perceive the aqueduct, suddenly she began to suspect his designs, and in a decided tone of voice asked her guide if they would soon stop, and whither they were going.

‘Here we are at the end of our journey. Here is our temple ; and the aqueduct is not visible just here, as it passes through the valley at the back.’

The temple that he pointed out was one of the most ancient edifices around Rome, and its state of dilapidation seemed as much the consequence of neglect as the work of time. For the demolished roof they had substituted a covering of thatch, and this was already half hidden under the moss and ivy enveloping the building. But however damaged the temple was, or rather because the worshippers had left it, as a sanctuary deserted by the gods, the corrupt priests had made it a place of meeting for the Epicureans of Rome.

Zipporah, whose mournful forebodings seemed confirmed by the cawing of the rooks inhabiting

this wild district, rose, resolved to jump out of the car in spite of the rapid rate at which they were going ; but the priest, having noticed her intention, held her down forcibly on her seat.

‘Release me!’ cried she, struggling with him ; ‘dare you retain a free girl against her will? Where is my father? I will go no farther. Stop! Help! Come to the rescue!’

She was screaming in this way when the carriage stopped at a back door leading into the hall of the temple. Shuddering, as she rapidly glanced at this door, she saw four men there, whose effeminate appearance and sacerdotal vestments alone prevented them from being taken for professional banditti ; but the cold and cruel look she perceived on their faces left her no hope of either softening them by her prayers or her tears.

‘I will not get out of this car,’ said Zipporah determinedly. ‘I will not enter this building, before knowing where I am, and why I am brought hither.’

‘We shall know quite well how to force you. Do not scream ; your cries will not be heard at all in this solitary place.’

Unable to use sufficient resistance, Zipporah was carried into a room in the temple. And the ac-

complices of this criminal outrage withdrew, telling her that, instead of imploring succour, which she would never get from any one, she would do better to submit to her fate. When she had recovered a little from her first excitement, the young Jewess examined the room where she was shut up. It was a square room, whose walls still bore traces of ancient paintings. There was but a single window, with strong bars of iron; a thick bed of reeds covered the floor, and on a little table was placed a cold but carefully prepared collation.

After having reflected for some time, but uselessly, on the means of escape, she remembered that she had always found prayer the best resource in time of trouble and tribulation; so she knelt down and prayed to her Heavenly Father for His almighty protection, and all the more fervently as she had no hopes of being saved by human means.

Comforted by this devotional act, she was able to think over all that had happened with a degree of calm she could not have imagined possible under her present position. Sihor's prophecy in the hostelry of 'Solomon's Well' returned to her memory: 'They will tamper with your filial piety in order to entrap you.' But amidst all her afflic-

tions, she derived some comfort in finding that her father's illness was only imaginary, indeed a regular falsehood, to induce her to leave the house, and fall into the power of her enemy. This thought gave her more courage to face the dangers which threatened her in her own person.

'If I am deprived of all human succour,' so she said to herself, 'God will never forsake me—He who has wrought so many miracles in favour of those who implored His goodness and His mercy, as each page of our history proves very plainly.'

Whilst her memory recalled the chief of these miracles, she heard the footsteps of several persons coming near her prison. The door opened, but Antony entered alone, carefully closing the door after him.

'I am not come here,' so he said, 'to waste my time in beseeching you to hear me; neither am I come to quarrel with you, but merely to signify my pleasure. Just now you are too much overcome; you will give me your answer to-morrow morning.'

He then repeated his former proposals to her, adding, 'To-morrow I will return; have your

answer ready. If it be such as I wish, I will very soon divorce Octavia; but if it should be necessary to force you to marry me, I am determined to do so. I shall be deaf alike to transports of rage as to prayers and entreaties. Opposition can irritate me, but it can never subdue me.'

His tone only proved too clearly that nothing would move him. When he had left the room, Zipporah remained for some time with her hands joined over her knees, her eyes fixed on the floor in a mournful state of stupor; and she only seemed to rouse herself when she saw the wretch who had decoyed her from Rome enter her presence.

Rising, she fixed upon him a look of anger and disdain, reproaching him in the bitterest terms with baseness and cowardice. But he only smiled; and Zipporah, as if suddenly remembering that it was useless and even dangerous to exasperate him, threw herself at his feet, beseeching him in the name of honour and humanity to repair her wrongs by granting her her liberty.

'Young fool!' replied the priest, 'why are you so broken-hearted? There is not a Roman lady who would refuse to be in your place, and would

think herself highly honoured by marrying Marc Antony.'

Then he called the porter, who, entering, removed the reeds scattered over the room, and raised up a heavy iron grating, which concealed the opening of a subterranean retreat.

Zipporah shuddered ; but reflecting that by seeming submission she might perchance obtain some indulgence, she no sooner noticed the signal made her by the priest to descend, than she went down the staircase and entered the vault under the temple.

The refreshments were brought down from the room, and placed on a stone table by the side of a bed arranged with some degree of elegance ; and when the priest had once more advised Zipporah not to give way to excessive grief, which would only spoil her beauty, he left her alone in her prison.

Up to this moment the young Jewess had borne all the horrors of her position with comparative courage ; for what prisoner is there who does not hope to be able to regain sweet liberty ? But when she reflected on her father's grief, on this father who loved her so tenderly, she burst into tears.

Again she knelt down and prayed fervently ; then threw herself on her bed, where fresh presentiments, each sadder than the other, seemed to overpower her. She had had no sleep the night before ; so now, completely exhausted by all her varied emotions, and quite worn out, she felt unable to keep awake any longer.





CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DELIVERANCE.

ABOUT the middle of the night, cries of alarm resounded through the interior of the temple, drawing Zipporah out of her soporific state. She jumped off her bed, crying out: 'Here they are! here they are! my deliverers are come! The Lord is come to my help!'

But though she listened very attentively, she heard nothing but the wind blowing among the trees surrounding the ruined temple; then she went part of the way up the stairs, and placed herself under the iron railing, shouting as loud as she could, that her friends might hear her voice, and so discover the spot where she was shut up. Her voice re-echoed through the vaults and in the room above, but no one answered her. She re-seated

herself on her couch, her heart oppressed with fear and disquietude, for the temple seemed entirely forsaken.

Then a loud voice, which appeared to come from the bottom of the dungeon, cried to her, 'Go away from the iron railing and come this way; very soon you will be free.'

She wished to do as she was told, but she dared not venture into this frightful labyrinth, when a reddish light penetrated into the vaults by the iron railing, accompanied by a whizzing sound, unlike the wind.

The temple was on fire. The screams she had heard were uttered by the priests when they were about to flee from the danger.

The fire made the place so light that she was able to go in the direction of the voice, and she came to a rift in the rock, which afforded a passage to the fresh air without, whilst a stifling heat was diffused under the arches of the vault. Half an hour had scarcely passed before Zipporah heard the iron railing being opened. She came back near it, and by the light of the conflagration, which increased rapidly, saw the porter waiting for her. Overpowered with joy, she rushed out of the cave

and ran towards the gate where she had entered the temple.

‘No, no,’ said the porter, ‘we cannot get out on this side ; the fire hinders us. Follow me.’

Zipporah obeyed, and soon found herself in the temple. One entire side was already the prey of the flames. When they reached the portico, her guide said to her :

‘Now, it is for yourself and the one who has charged himself with your escape to do the rest. You will find him there at the foot of a rock under those trees.’

Zipporah thanked her deliverer, and went to the spot he had pointed out. Great was her surprise at recognising Valens, who came to meet her, accompanied by another officer. Feeling sure that she owed her deliverance to him, she was on the point of throwing herself at his feet to thank him ; but the centurion prevented her, and said :

‘Do not lose precious time ; you are surrounded by dangers, and your father is longing for you. Go back to Rome ; my friend here will conduct you to your father. I regret very much that I am unable to go with you ; later you will know why. Tell your respected parent that he must not wait

another moment in Rome. Beseech him to flee, and that instantly, or you are both lost.'

Having said these words, he went away, while his friend, taking the opposite road, led Zipporah into a small valley, where they found a covered carriage waiting for them. They got into it, and the driver went as quickly as possible.

A last ray of light, issuing from the burning temple, permitted the young Jewess to examine the features of her new companion. He was a man somewhat advanced in age, and whose countenance, although grave and stern, bespoke a frankness and mildness only fit to inspire confidence. Until now he had observed the strictest silence, as though fearing to be overtaken ; but, once settled in the carriage, he inquired of Zipporah how she felt.

'I feel pretty well since I am with you,' said she. 'Ah! I have indeed been frightened ; but I thank God for having sent you with your worthy friend. May the Lord reward you both, in loading you with His best blessings! Will you allow me to ask how you managed to discover my prison?'

'The day you went to witness the games at the amphitheatre, Valens received the order to go with

his men to a village in the neighbourhood of Rome, which, they said, had several times been attacked by brigands who had come down from the Apennines. The next morning he left Rome, hoping soon to be recalled. But I informed him that his exile from the city would last as long as your sojourn there. The fact is, a knight who was sitting in the amphitheatre immediately over Antony, at the moment when Valens killed the tiger, heard the triumvir distinctly say these words in an undertone: "What interest does this centurion take in this young girl? To-morrow he shall leave Rome."

'I wrote to Valens, telling him the true meaning of the order he had received, and he replied by imploring me to watch very closely all your enemy's proceedings, in order that he might be able to warn you of them. This he did in the last letter which he wrote you, the one I sent you in the middle of the night. However, we did not imagine that the danger was so imminent, when yesterday morning I saw you leave the city with the infamous priest employed to take you away.

'Immediately I quitted Rome to see Valens. Our resolution was soon formed. It was a matter for consideration how to bribe the porter of the temple.

‘As I was acquainted with one of the priests of Cybele, I could easily visit the temple without arousing any suspicion. After having chatted with him for a long while, I left, and when I arrived at the door I made the porter a sign to follow me, as I had something to say to him. He followed me a few steps. I asked him if he wished to become free. I had not to wait for his reply, he was indeed overjoyed at the mere thought; but when I told him what conditions I annexed before giving him his freedom, he shook his head sadly, to make me understand it was out of his power to accept them.

‘After a few moments’ thought he said: “If you are as anxious to deliver this young girl as I am to escape from the yoke of slavery, there remains but one way; but I can assure you of success. Our priests are exceedingly superstitious, and I have heard them say very often that the temple would never be destroyed excepting by fire from heaven. Let us burn it; the young prisoner is shut up in a subterranean vault, extending far enough for her to have nothing to fear from the conflagration. The priests will think that fire from heaven has fallen upon their temple, and they will flee; I

alone will remain in the neighbourhood, to open the vault directly the first danger is over."

'As the slave explained, this means was too simple not to be employed. So it was agreed that, taking advantage of the darkness of the night, I should set fire to the thatch covering the temple, and that, as soon as the flames had devoured the part of the building immediately above your prison, the porter should find a plan of giving you your liberty.

'I went back to Valens, and when it was night, both of us left together to put our attempt into execution. What we hoped came to pass: we saw the priests rush out towards Rome; and very soon you too will be there, in your father's arms. Valens was unable to follow us without running the risk of being recognised by the secret agents of the triumvir, and without exposing yourself to the danger of falling again into his hands.'

Zipporah was at a loss for words to thank her deliverer; but he besought her to take care of herself, and not weary herself with talking. And really, the poor child was worn out with hunger and her varied emotions; she had eaten nothing at all since the morning of the preceding day.

Her protector stopped at a lonely house, situated in the midst of fields, to induce her to take some refreshment. Then they continued their drive; but instead of going in a straight line to Rome, they made a long turn, in order to enter the city by a gate opposite to the one leading to the temple of Cybele.

The day began to dawn when they reached the walls; but as it was the hour when the streets were filled with people, they entered the hostelry nearest to them. Some soldiers happening to stop there just at the moment they were desirous to continue their journey, they were obliged to wait for some time in the private room; and so it was that they were unable to reach Rome before it was too late to prevent Eleazar from going to the Senate, and uttering in their astonished ears words as harsh as they were unexpected and unusual.

At length they were in the street adjoining that where Eleazar lodged. The officer stopped the carriage, saying to Zipporah:

‘I must leave you here, madam, or else I may draw fresh danger upon you. You are now safe, and can easily reach your father’s house without my aid. But tell him not to delay a moment, but

to quit this city before your enemy can hear that you have been so fortunate as to escape the fire.'

Zipporah wished to thank the officer again; she had no opportunity, for he jumped out of the carriage, and disappeared in a turn of the street. The carriage went on, and only stopped when it reached Eleazar's door. Zipporah threw off the mantle, in which she had been entirely concealed, got down, and rushed into the house.

But scarcely was she in the hall than her strength gave way; she was obliged to rest for some moments against the wall. Making a great effort, she managed to totter into the room where Eleazar was sitting.

'My father! my dear father!' exclaimed she, then fell fainting into his arms.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE DEPARTURE.

AS soon as Zipporah had recovered from her swoon, she received the blessings and the embraces of her father; but some time elapsed before, these transports of joy being calmed, she felt able to give an account of the dangers and sufferings by which the Lord had seen fit to try her faith.

‘My child,’ said Eleazar when she had finished, ‘let us together thank God, who has restored thee to my love. If the laws offered here any protection to innocence, I would demand that the villain who has dared place a sacrilegious hand on thee might be punished as he most justly deserves; but God wills that we should bend our head under the yoke of the heathen, in awaiting the time when His

justice shall avenge the honour of His chosen people. Let us depart ; let us place ourselves beyond the reach of this tyrant of Rome and his slaves. The only thing I regret in quitting this accursed land is, that I cannot thank those generous men who have so bravely exposed themselves on our account ; but let us hope that one day the Lord will grant us an opportunity of testifying our gratitude.'

Immediately they set about making their preparations for leaving Rome ; and Zechariah having fetched a hired conveyance, they got into it, and left the city by the Flaminian Gate, the opposite gate to that by which they had entered on their arrival.

For some time they were silent, communing with their own thoughts ; but though these were painful and overpowering, they became less so as they felt they were travelling away from a place where they had suffered so much.

'Where are we, my dear Zechariah ?' at length inquired Eleazar, who had hidden himself in the bottom of the carriage with Zipporah.

'We have left the suburbs near the windings of the Tiber, and are already far from the city. I see

the top of the Capitol and the height of the Temple of Vesta above the trees behind us; that is all to be seen of Rome. Everything is quiet around us; at this moment we are alone on this large prairie.'

'Hallelujah! hallelujah! my child is saved. Come to my arms, my beloved Zipporah! I possess thee anew. We will never separate from each other, no, never! I it was who brought thee into Dagon's temple, but the Lord has brought thee safely out of it. Hosanna! blessed be His holy name!'

So saying, he clasped his daughter to his heart, and his tears flowed abundantly down his cheeks and beard.

'My father! my father!' replied Zipporah; 'this blessed moment, this thrice happy time! But be calm; spare your weakness, all your limbs tremble.'

'Yes, from joy, my child, at having found thee again—at pressing thee in my arms. But, weak as they are, they will never let thee go any more.'

Whilst Eleazar was thus covering his child with caresses, his emotion suddenly deprived him of his strength; his eyes closed, and he remained motionless for some moments, leaning on Zechariah, and

still murmuring Zipporah's name. The pure and fresh air of the prairie revived him by degrees. He saw his kinsman's eyes wet with tears ; taking his hand, he said to him : ' Forgive me, my dear Zechariah, if by the violence of my feelings I have recalled sad recollections.'

He tried to say more, but his sobs prevented him, and his daughter, embracing him, implored him to be calm. Eleazar looked at her with inexpressible tenderness ; smiling, he nodded at her, as though to tell her he meant to obey. At length he settled himself in a corner of the conveyance, and allowed the sweet tears of paternal love and gratitude to the Lord to flow down his cheeks.

His companions respected the silence, and not a word was exchanged until they reached the place that they had allowed their driver to select as their retreat, in waiting for the moment when they could embark.

The dwelling where they intended to hide was an isolated house on the banks of the Tiber, the general resort of fishermen and sailors. Here they heard that merchant vessels and other large ships usually stopped four or five miles lower down, following the course of the river, in the direction of

Ostia. But however anxious they were to go thither at once, they were too much fatigued not to halt here for a few hours.

During this time Zechariah had gone out to make inquiries; but he soon returned to his companions, with the agreeable intelligence that he had taken their berths in a merchant ship about to sail to Tyre. He added that, if they did not wish to go by land from that city to Jerusalem, they could easily find another vessel to take them to Joppa.

Hoping that quiet sleep would restore their strength, the Hebrews determined to pass the night at this hostelry; but they took the wise precaution to retain their carriage, for fear of the driver returning to Rome and divulging the secret of their flight. It was night, and Eleazar was preparing to thank the Lord in his evening prayer for his daughter's wondrous deliverance, when he heard the sound of a trumpet and the neighing of several horses. Very soon they heard repeated knocks at the door of the hostelry, and a voice cried in an imperious tone: 'Open, or I will burst the door! I demand entrance in the name of Marc Antony.'

At these terrible words, Zipporah, who until then had concealed her fears not to alarm her father,

joined her hands, and screamed with fright: 'Oh! we are lost! What will become of us now?'

Struck with horror and dismay, Eleazar clasped his daughter in his arms, as though they would snatch her from him. He remained silent and speechless, but his lips moved in vain efforts to articulate what he wished to say.

'I hear women's voices,' said Zechariah. 'I am going down to find out the cause of all this noise. If you hear me call out "Jerusalem!" then conclude that we are in danger, and flee quickly by the back door leading to the fields, whilst I will parley with the enemy, or stop him forcibly, until I have allowed you time to escape.'

And he went out hastily, followed by Jehoiakim. Embracing each other, scarcely breathing for fear of losing a sound, trembling in every limb, Eleazar and his daughter appeared to have lost all feeling, when, at the end of a few moments, they heard the mistress of the house disputing angrily with some women whom she refused to let in; and from what they could make out, these females were dancing women of the company of actors belonging to Antony, and were on their way to Egypt, as the triumvir intended embarking at Brundisium.

Zechariah confirmed this intelligence; and all praised the Lord for His mercies with the same fervour as if they had been saved from fresh dangers. They then separated, and passed the night in sweet sleep, without being disturbed by any other incident.

On the morrow they went very early to the quay, where a boat was waiting for them to take them on board the Tyrian vessel. Before leaving the land, Eleazar shook off the dust from his feet, saying to his companions:

‘Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground, we have nevertheless been overtaken by great evils in punishment for our sins. Let us shake off the dust of this idolatrous and accursed country, and the more so as we are about to turn our face towards the Holy Land.’

His companions imitated his example of striking their feet on the ground, and, entering the boat, they sailed down the river; whilst Zipporah, in a sonorous voice, though somewhat restrained from fear, chanted the magnificent psalm, *In exitu Israel*: ‘When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The sea saw it,

and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob, which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.' Never before in the whole course of their lives had this beautiful psalm recalled to them so vividly the goodness of the Lord towards His chosen people as at this moment, when they had experienced how good God is to those who love Him and hope in His mercy.

As soon as they reached the ship which was to take them to Syria, the master ordered the sailors to unloose her moorings, and they continued to descend the Tiber as far as the port of Ostia between the two banks of the river, covered with a multitude of villas, statues, groves, and gardens. Having cast anchor between a picturesque island and the commercial town of Ostia, at the mouth of the Tiber, they were detained there two whole days, the time necessary to complete her cargo.

But as they no longer dreaded pursuit, they only regretted this delay because it retarded their return to Palestine.

In the expectation of this joyous event, which no longer appeared doubtful, peace and contentment once more sat on Eleazar's brow. He chatted with Zechariah, congratulated and embraced his daughter, pointing out to them in what direction they must sail to arrive at Tyre. At length, as all preparations were completed, they weighed anchor, and the vessel, aided by a favourable wind, ploughed majestically the waves, very soon leaving far behind it the port they had left so recently.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

ALEXANDRIA.

THE voyagers had already doubled the promontory of Pachynum (Cape Passaro), when, the wind continuing to blow with violence from the north, they found themselves forced to approach the coast of Africa.

One morning the Jews saw a grand and magnificent city just in front of them. It formed a vast half-circle around a large port. On the right and left, advancing far into the sea, were two promontories, covered with superb buildings and forts, commanding the entire vicinity. The extremity of one of these heights was crowned with a circular tower, very strong indeed, and composed of several stories.

‘That is the *Pharos* of Alexandria!’ exclaimed Zechariah.

‘Yes,’ replied the captain of the ship; ‘the wind will perhaps oblige us to stop here some days. I

said nothing to you about it, because I was aware that you were anxious to arrive in Palestine; but you will lose nothing by waiting. I will myself take you on to Joppa as soon as the weather will permit.'

This assurance did not serve to calm the Hebrews. They had heard that Antony was coming to Egypt.

'Listen, Rabbi Eleazar,' said Zechariah to his kinsman, when he had drawn him on one side; 'we must not despair beforehand. We shall be safer at Alexandria than at Rome; and if you will believe me, we shall be able to escape all the cunning and artifice of our enemy by a means as simple as it is easy. If you allow Zipporah to stop with us, we shall run the risk of losing her a second time; but by removing her, we can make our persecutor believe that she perished in the conflagration of the temple of Cybele, and nothing will hinder us from taking advantage of a favourable opportunity to flee with her either by land or water.'

'No, no,' replied Eleazar decidedly; 'I will never again separate from my child. If she must die, I will die with her. The Lord tries my faith in a very painful way, but may His holy will be done!'

'The Lord will not forsake us. However, it is His will that we on our side should do all that

lies in our power to baffle our enemy's projects. This is what I propose. As it is rather improbable that you can remain at Alexandria without Marc Antony hearing of it, we must above all things endeavour to keep your daughter out of his sight. I know a Hebrew living here, a respectable aged man, who will willingly keep her at his house until we can depart for Jerusalem. If you consent to it, I will convey her to this place of safety, where she will have no danger to fear.'

Eleazar's only reply was a deep sigh ; and Zechariah, thinking that he approved of his proposal, left him to his melancholy reflections.

Passing through the rocks encompassing the port, our voyagers met with a number of galleys and little pleasure-boats covered with the most sumptuous ornaments. On their right extended magnificent palaces, temples, and groves, above which rose an elevated citadel. They afterwards entered a large and deep canal, communicating with the inner port, where everything already announced the movement of this town, the principal emporium of commerce between Asia and Europe, and which, at this epoch, was peopled by more than three hundred thousand inhabitants, without reckoning slaves.

Alexandria was divided from north to south by a large and magnificent street, extending between two rows of columns from the sea to the Lake Mareotis, and terminated at its two extremities by the 'Gates of the Sun and Moon.' This large street was cut at right angles by another street not less beautiful, and which at its point of intersection with the first formed a large place or square, with a superb obelisk in its centre.

When our voyagers arrived, this square was filled with an immense crowd of people. To avoid the periodical winds, the philosophers, who always congregated at Alexandria, and who might be easily recognised by their mantle or cloak, by their beard and their wallet, assembled in places warmed by the sun, disputing among themselves with all the puerile subtleness of logic. The swarthy Egyptian, his legs and arms bare, his beard trimmed to a corner, walked with a sad, dejected air in his own city, then become the headquarters of the triumphant Romans. Several indolent Asiatics were lazily lying on some carpets; whilst the negro passed in front of them, singing the airs of his country, as if he wished to prove that, though his body bore the slave's chain, his soul was neverthe-

less free and independent. Here, the Greek of graceful form, and clad with care and elegance, endeavoured to forget his country's degradation, by affecting a disdainful look and giving himself up to pleasure. There, the Roman veteran, with bronzed features, advanced proudly, and, ascending the steps leading to the temples of Isis and Serapis, regarded with a supercilious and silent smile the people he had caused to pass under the yoke.

But merely looking at this mixed multitude, it was impossible to say whether it was luxury or trade, peace or war, indolence or industry, that formed the character of this large city. Caravans arriving from the East, still covered with the dust of the desert, had no sooner passed, than they were followed by buffoons, dancers, and musicians. From time to time might be seen detachments of auxiliary troops passing through, drawn from the provinces adjoining Asia and Africa. There were effeminate Syrians; or Arabians mounted on wild horses; or Libyans with leaden complexions and riding like barbarians; or even a cohort of Roman soldiers, a silent phalanx having in the midst the golden eagle.

Such were some of the scenes that met our travellers' eyes. But Zipporah was not to see much more, for Zechariah went with her up the least frequented streets, avoiding the fashionable and large streets, as he was anxious to place her in safety under his friend's roof.

This friend was a distinguished physician,—one consulted by persons of the highest rank on account of his extensive knowledge of every branch of his profession.

Zechariah entered his house as a sacred and inviolable retreat; but he only found a woman, who told him that for several days her master had been residing in a house much nearer the centre of the town. This news was very vexatious to Eleazar's kinsman, who feared that, by taking Zipporah any farther, he might expose her to be recognised by some of Antony's agents, or perchance by the triumvir himself; so he proposed to the young girl that she should go to the physician's house with this woman, instead of his accompanying her. Zipporah agreed to it, though not without some scruples, and Zechariah gave her a letter which she was to deliver to his dear friend.

All being settled, Zechariah went back to

Eleazar, and Zipporah, wrapped in her mantle so as to defy recognition, followed her new guide to the physician's present dwelling.

On arriving, she was introduced into the general consulting room, where they told her to wait. Suddenly the door opened, and Marc Antony appeared before her startled eyes. Both of them at the same moment uttered a cry, but Antony's was the more piercing, and it was he who showed the greater terror. Persuaded at first that he beheld a ghost, he became as white as death, his lips turned pale, and all his limbs trembled violently.

Zipporah was the first to recover. At once she felt that she had fallen into the power of her worst enemy ; but she had noticed his alarm, and thought that she might take advantage of it to inspire him with better feelings.

'You believed me dead,' she said ; 'but although I found in mortals like yourself preservers who released me from the prison where you had shut me up, it is none the less true that they were the instruments of that God whom you disown. If you would avoid the wrath of Heaven, and profit by the terrible warning lately given you, do not persist in your criminal designs, but restore me to my relations.'

During the time she was speaking, Antony had had leisure to recover from the superstitious fright by which he had been overcome.

‘Listen to me, beautiful Zipporah,’ said he, looking at his victim in a bold way; ‘if you thank the God of Israel for having released you from your dungeon, to which of our divinities ought I to offer a sacrifice in gratitude for having brought you to my house?’

‘To your house!’ exclaimed Zipporah, with surprise mingled with consternation; ‘to your house!’

‘Yes; at least into that part of my palace allotted to my physician, that he may be constantly near me. You see plainly that you are fated to be mine, since your God Himself brings you to me!’

‘Audacious heathen! do not blaspheme. Insult the unfortunate slave fallen into your hands as much as the baseness of your soul will permit, but raise not your impious voice against her God!’

‘So you think to escape me a second time, presumptuous maiden? Do you, then, forget what you are and what I am?’

‘I have not forgotten who is the God of Israel, for whom armies and citadels are but dust; and I

have faith that He will never abandon His servant in the hour of danger and adversity.'

'A truce with words! Follow me. I can still be indulgent; your fate depends on yourself. You will either be my wife or my slave. Come, and if your own life and your father's life are dear to you, keep silence.'





CHAPTER XXIX.

CLEOPATRA.

TAKING advantage of the physician's absence, and also of his servants', who were busy in the garden, Antony conducted his prisoner through several dark corridors, into the part of the palace occupied by himself, making her enter a lonely room, where he shut her up. Overpowered by the violence of her agitation, the unfortunate girl uttered a loud scream, and fell down insensible.

When she recovered from her swoon, she was lying on a sofa, and near her were two women making efforts to revive her. Her bewildered state of mind at first made her think she was the sport of a dream, but she soon felt the sad reality of her present position, and told the women she

wished to be left alone. They retired. Zipporah knelt down, raised her eyes and hands to heaven and prayed thus :

‘My God, Thou hast permitted this fresh trial : may Thy holy will be done ! Have pity on me, O my God ! sustain my courage, and deliver me from the hands of my enemy and Thine. Thou art my refuge amidst all the evils surrounding me ; I hope in Thee, I wait on Thee, be Thou my Helper and Deliverer. Unto Thee do I commend my father : comfort him in my absence. Thou knowest his love for me ; grant, I beseech Thee, that he may not hear of my trouble until I myself bring him the news of my deliverance. Amen.’

She rose from her knees, walked all round the room, and tried in vain to unfasten the door. She then ran to the windows, for she had noticed that they had no iron railing. These windows were placed tremendously high, and overlooked an inner court, separated by a wall from the street.

In despair she was about to withdraw from the window, when, amid the noise in the street, she fancied she heard a well-known voice. She listened, and very soon she distinguished the voice of Valens,

who probably commanded a manœuvre of his soldiers. It was impossible that she could catch sight of him, for the enclosure-wall hid all the neighbourhood ; but, perchance, by screaming, she might possibly be heard by him, and call him to her aid.

She had already opened her mouth, when she recollected the triumvir's threats. 'No, no,' said she to herself, 'I would rather die than expose my father's life. The Lord is my hope ; He will save me here, as He delivered me from the temple of Cybele.'

Here a sudden thought passes through her mind : she unfastens her necklet, rolls it up by means of one of her sandals, signs her name with a knife on the medallion, and praying God to guide her hand, she throws it on the side where she had heard Valens. The necklace grazes the ridge of the wall, and disappears from her eyes.

'I thank Thee, O God !' she said, falling back on the sofa. Her heart beat violently ; her breath seemed to stop ; her body shivered at the consequences that her boldness might produce, although a secret presentiment bade her hope.

That evening, as she lay with her eyes fixed on the floor, absorbed in a mournful reverie, she was

aroused all at once by a rumbling sound, that seemed to come nearer and nearer. Soon afterwards, trembling with alarm, she saw a part of the wainscoting raised, and by an opening made in the wall, a lady of small stature advanced into the room, covered from head to foot in a species of shawl, which only allowed her eyes to be seen. In her right hand she held a parcel, which on entering she threw on the ground.

‘Do not alarm yourself, Zipporah,’ said the unknown, who had perceived the young maiden’s trouble, ‘it is a friend you see; but though I speak your language, I confess that I am not your compatriot. I fear I have frightened you; nevertheless I come to release you from captivity, and restore you to your relations.’

So saying, she seated herself on the sofa, beckoning to Zipporah to do the same, with the air of condescension habitual to a woman accustomed to receive homage, but who wished to treat her as an equal whilst speaking to her.

When Zipporah had seated herself, the stranger threw her veil aside, and the young Jewess was dazzled as much by the splendour of her beauty as by the richness of the jewels with which she

was covered. Her complexion was brown, even for an Egyptian, but the blood was visible through the texture of her skin ; one might have said that her form had been cast in the mould of an able artist. Her beauty was somehow the least of her attractions ; the way she had of varying her expression was the most seductive of her charms ; and as if she wished even a simple girl to admire the wonderful flexibility of her manner, she assumed alternately a languishing, or an animated, coquettish air, or the gracious and condescending majesty of a queen.

‘You are beautiful,’ she said, looking at Zipporah from head to foot ; ‘you have a carriage both dignified and imposing ; but I could never have thought that this kind of beauty was to Marc Antony’s taste. He has declared to me times without number, that a woman taller than I am would never suit him ; but his gross and material mind knows neither truth nor constancy, and in my own capital, even in my own palace, he dares forget the oaths sworn to Cleopatra !’

‘To Cleopatra!’ exclaimed Zipporah. ‘Is it, then, to Cleopatra that I am speaking ? O beautiful, O illustrious queen ! if you love Marc Antony’—

‘If I love Marc Antony!’ replied Cleopatra, interrupting the Jewish maiden; and she shook her head with indignation, at the same time as her mouth expressed unspeakable haughtiness and contempt. ‘Listen to me. Policy often makes cruel exactions— But why confess my shame? Know only that a princess descended from the illustrious race of the Ptolemies is not made to love a gross, brutal, and soulless soldier.’

‘I believe it, I believe it! But you cannot detest him, you cannot abhor him as much as I do. You have said you came to deliver me; pardon my impatience if I dare urge you to fulfil your promise. You cannot imagine the grief that tortures me.’

‘The grief you complain of will soon pass away, but who will snatch me from mine? In vain I give myself up to continual dissipation; of what use is it to change amusements each moment, when nothing can cure the wounds of the heart? Slave to the caprices of the triumvir, I am alternately goddess, queen, bacchant. I hunt with him, I follow him to the camp; but the soul of Cleopatra is too elevated to debase itself without being shocked. Under each disguise, I feel the profound humiliation of being obliged to pay court to him,

as the conqueror of my country ; yes, I must flatter him whom I detest and despise as a man. Do you think I have sorrows enough ? But I see that you are impatient, your eyes are fixed on the secret door. Antony was very much astonished to find that there are subterranean passages under this palace communicating with all the theatres ; but he does not suspect that a veritable labyrinth exists in these walls ; and that is why I allow him to occupy it. Follow me.'

Covering herself again with her shawl, Cleopatra re-entered the wall, and, followed by Zipporah, she ascended a dark and narrow staircase, ending in a small landing-place. When they had arrived there, she said to the Jewish maiden :

'Look well under your feet, but very carefully, for the least false step would precipitate you into an abyss.'

Zipporah looked down and saw a very high hall, and found she was standing near the ceiling. This hall was as large as the interior of a temple, and was surrounded by massive columns, decorated with colossal statues of Isis veiled, and of other monstrous divinities of the Egyptian mythology. A stone cornice, about two feet in width, reached all round

the wall, extending from the landing-place where the two women were standing to the opposite side of the hall.

‘Are you courageous enough to venture over this bridge?’ inquired Cleopatra of Zipporah, pointing out the stone cornice; ‘this is the only chance of escape you have, and I myself have come across it on purpose to see you.’

‘I would brave any danger to escape from Marc Antony. But how shall I ever prove my gratitude to you?’

‘Perhaps the motive that actuates me is not so disinterested as you seem to think. But let us return to your prison.’

‘And why should I not attempt this passage at once?’

‘Your rash haste may suit your own projects, but certainly not mine. You must obey my wishes blindly and unreservedly.’

When they came back to the room which had been a prison to Zipporah, Cleopatra said to her :

‘The hall we have just seen is the hall of Isis. The chief priests and all persons of distinction in Alexandria are to meet there to-night, to attend a grand feast given by me to Antony. Just be-

fore midnight, you will cover yourself completely with the disguise I have brought in this bag ; you will ascend the same staircase as just now ; you will hide yourself on the landing-place, until you hear the high priest of Isis propose the health of the triumvir. Then advance along the stone cornice with your usual majestic step, taking care to turn your head towards the wall ; above all, do not fail to stretch out the left arm in the direction of the assembly, and move it in a way to express both indignation and contempt.'

'But what part do you intend me to play?'

'You must obey without questioning me. Listen to me : at the other end of the cornice you will find an opening in the wall, and a woman who will show you the way out of the palace.'

'And who will conduct me to my father?'

'A man who takes great interest in you, and who alone of all Antony's *suite* appears the only one who is animated with feelings worthy of the Roman name. Do you recognise this chain?' And she drew from her bosom the same chain that Zipporah had thrown into the street a few hours previously.

'It is, then, to Valens that I am indebted for your mediation in my favour,' said Zipporah.

‘Yes, it is to Valens as much as to Cleopatra that you are indebted for your release.’

‘Oh, my illustrious benefactress! how can I ever prove my gratitude? I feel quite unable to do so.’

‘I ask no thanks; only think of carrying out my wishes, if you do not desire to find an enemy in me. Antony’s love, however fearful it may appear to you, is nothing compared with Cleopatra’s hatred.’

Whilst speaking, her smile had disappeared, succeeded by a haughty and threatening expression of countenance; and making a gesture with her hand to enforce obedience, she disappeared in the same manner as she had arrived.





CHAPTER XXX.

THE TEMPLE OF ISIS.

IFT again to herself, Zipporah could scarcely believe that she had not been the victim of some phantom of her own troubled fancy ; but the bag containing the disguise for her flight lay at her feet, and the secret passage she was to tread that night remained open before her. Then she recollected what Sihor had predicted, ‘that a daughter of Babylon would save a daughter of Israel ;’ and she no longer doubted that Heaven had sent Cleopatra to deliver her.

When the Pharos or lighthouse was lighted, and its brightness penetrated into her room, her impatience would not allow her to remain seated ; so she walked up and down, taxing the hours with passing far too slowly. At last she unfastened the

parcel brought by Cleopatra, and began to dress herself.

The disguise consisted of a garment that Cleopatra herself had worn one day, when she represented the goddess Isis. The robe was decorated with all the attributes of this divinity, and the head-dress was composed of a wreath of leaves with ears of wheat, perfectly imitating nature.

When she had finished her toilet, not knowing what costume she had assumed, Zipporah put her own clothes into the bag that had held the disguise, and concealing it under the white mantle, which covered her completely, she ascended the hidden staircase, where she found herself in total darkness. However, by degrees as she went forward, she was lighted by a feeble glimmering from the hall of Isis, and which increased perceptibly. Very soon the joyous buzz of a banquet let her know that the orgie had begun. She reached the landing-place, and hid herself behind the capital of a massive column, formed of branches of palm trees, where she could safely see what was going on beneath her in the hall.

Golden chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, and candelabra of the same precious metal placed

along the walls, diffused the light of day in a most brilliant manner over the entire extent of this immense building. Tables loaded with sumptuous plate of gold and silver, and superb vessels of costly perfumes, displayed that foolish profusion which, according to Marc Antony's gross ideas, alone constituted magnificence. All the guests, men and women, were clothed in the most brilliant costumes, and were seated according to their rank at different tables, Marc Antony presiding over the first.

Crowned with vine leaves, on this occasion he represented Bacchus ; while Cleopatra, sitting at his right hand, wore the costume and the attributes of Venus, the goddess of beauty and love. Young girls waited on this royal couple ; but the more elegant their dress, the less their splendour agreed with the colossal statue of the veiled Isis, placed on a throne at the extremity of the hall, and with the other divinities, whose hideous features were rendered still more horrible by the reddish light of the flame rising from the altars.

As if he wished to show as much as possible the absurd inconsistency of acting the part of a god, Antony, who lived in perpetual fear of being

poisoned even by the woman he loved, never touched any dish without getting Cleopatra to taste it first, for fear that his immortality should too soon come to an end. These suspicions scarcely allowed him to enjoy the pleasures of a feast, or even those of daily life; however, they did not seem to stop the flow of his noisy merriment. Proving his right to represent the god of wine and debauchery, he emptied his goblet every moment, using expressions which ought to have appeared all the more revolting as he was speaking in the presence of women and priests. The besotted Romans around him received his sallies with acclamations, whilst Cleopatra, whose mind was more correct, and ear more delicate and refined, could with difficulty restrain the disgust she experienced.

At length a herald commanded silence, and the high priest of Isis, standing in front of the altar of the goddess, exclaimed: 'To the health of the god Antony! May the libations he offers at this moment to his sister Isis be favourably accepted by her!' At the same time he threw some perfumed oil over the fire burning on the altar, and the music began to play.

This was the signal for Zipporah. Commending

herself to God by a short prayer, she went out from behind the capital where she had been hidden, with a beating heart, advancing with a slow but firm step across the stone cornice, her head turned to the wall, and stretching out her left arm towards the guests with a gesture of contempt and anger.

‘The goddess! the goddess!’ exclaimed Cleopatra, making every one notice the apparition. ‘She rejects our offering! See, the fire on the altar is extinguished!’ At these words she fell backwards on her seat, as though struck with terror.

On account of the height of the hall, it was impossible to judge from below of the width of the stone cornice, so that it was easy to imagine that the angry goddess walked on the air, and she would let some frightful chastisement fall on the assembly. There was a moment’s silence and consternation, each one shuddering with terror similar to what overtook the proud monarch of Babylon and his courtiers, when, in the midst of their sacrilegious feast, they beheld the hand of the angel tracing mysterious characters on the wall. The music had ceased, the priests were prostrate on their faces before the altar. Among the guests some uttered cries of alarm, others seemed petrified, or pointed

out the finger of the goddess, who continued to advance majestically. Superstitious fear was depicted on every face. Very soon a frightful panic took possession of the entire assembly with the rapidity of lightning. Antony began to flee ignominiously; Cleopatra followed him; and at the expiration of a few moments, this splendid hall, with its lustres, its candelabra, its perfumes, was abandoned to the veiled goddess and her hideous satellites, appearing like giants left to watch over the forsaken banquet.

The superstitious Antony, hidden in the bottom of the palace, called all the priests of Isis before him to explain the meaning of this miracle. His love for Cleopatra had not yet reached that degree of exaltation which it attained later on, and he had not been able to make up his mind to grant her the island of Cyprus, as she had requested.

Determined to wrest from him by fear what she could not otherwise obtain, this artful queen had imagined to gain her point by the apparition of Zipporah under the costume of Isis, and she had confided in the priests of the goddess, that they might themselves extinguish the fire on the altar by pouring in water instead of oil.

These cunning hypocrites had no difficulty in persuading the triumvir, that Isis was displeased because he had refused to let the queen have possession of the island she had wished for, and which belonged to her all the more as she had had a ruined temple of Isis completely restored on this same island. To repair his fault, Antony saluted Cleopatra there and then, Queen of Cyprus.

The stratagem had succeeded. Cleopatra had rid herself of a rival who made her anxious, and had made use of her to obtain a rich and fertile land. In order to show that the anger of the goddess was appeased, she proposed to return into the festive hall. It is needless to add that the sacred fire burned with matchless brilliancy, and that no threatening apparition came any more to disturb the joy of the guests.

Zipporah had never suspected the character assigned her by her deliverer, until the moment when she heard the hall re-echo with Cleopatra's screams; otherwise she would have refused. But it was no time now to retrace her steps, and the confusion in the hall did not allow her to reflect on the singularity of her position; so she continued mechanically her aerial course, and, trembling all over, she fell into

the arms of the woman awaiting her in the passage with a lamp.

Putting on her own garments, she followed her guide through a long corridor, whence she descended by a secret staircase to the level of the street. There they stopped at a small door, and a moment after Zipporah was outside the palace. Then Valens approached her, saying :

‘I thank Heaven for having saved you from this abominable man ; you have nothing further to fear from him. Before he will have time to suspect the trick employed for your deliverance, you will be far away from Alexandria. Follow me with confidence. I have found out your father’s dwelling, and I am going to take you to him.’

‘Does he know of the mistake of which I have been the victim ?’

‘I think not. I went to the physician’s house, for I suspected you had been surprised there. I could not find him, and I was told he was with the triumvir. Perhaps Antony had made sure of his person to conceal the truth from him, or at least to keep him from divulging it. However it may be, you are free, thanks to the thought of throwing your chain out of the window of your prison. It fell at my feet ; I

picked it up, carried it immediately to Cleopatra, whom I felt sure I could interest in your behalf, by telling her that she had a rival in her own palace.'

As Valens and his companion pursued their way through the dark and silent streets of Alexandria, Eleazar and Zechariah were in a deep sleep. The former had gone that evening to the usual dwelling of his compatriot, the physician ; but when he had been assured that his daughter had been safely conducted to the new habitation occupied by the Jew, he had put off seeing Zipporah until the morrow, for he was unwilling to disturb her.

They awoke with a start owing to the repeated knocks at the door of the hotel, and they feared at first that they had been discovered.

Zechariah approached a window—one glance was sufficient for him to recognise his young relation ; and, without saying anything to Eleazar, he went down and reached the door at the same time as the master came to unfasten it.

'My dear Zipporah ! what has happened ?'

'You will soon hear,' said Valens ; 'go and inform Eleazar that his daughter is here.'

Zechariah went up directly, but before he had the opportunity of preparing his kinsman, who had risen



Zipporah threw her arms round her father's neck.

in fear and trembling, Zipporah appeared and threw her arms round her father's neck. We will not attempt to describe the scene following this unexpected reunion. The Hebrews wished to thank the centurion. When Valens, who until then had been a moved spectator of this affecting meeting, saw that they were thinking of him, he interrupted Eleazar by saying :

‘You owe me nothing. I have only fulfilled a vow, a cherished vow. Flee this town as soon as the day dawns. If you remain here any longer, you will only be exposed to fresh perils.’ And without explaining the nature of this vow so dear to him, he went out of the hostelry, and the sound of his footsteps was gradually lost in the distance.





CHAPTER XXXI.

THEIR RETURN TO THEIR NATIVE LAND.

BELIEVING that he had Zipporah quite safe, Antony had hastened to send back the presents brought by the Hebrew ambassadors, with the order that they should leave Alexandria in twenty-four hours.

He had added a letter to the presents, running thus: 'You left Rome so hurriedly, that I was unable to give you any reply on the object of your mission. Tell Antigonus, the usurper of the throne of your nation, that I am determined to uphold Herod, his concurrent, and that I advise him to lay down the crown of Judea before my lieutenant arrives with a Roman army to snatch it from his brow.'

As soon as day dawned, Eleazar received this letter and the presents, all the jewels, and the

messenger advised him not to exasperate the triumvir by remaining any longer in Alexandria.

As soon as they were provided with horses, Eleazar and his companions trotted out of the town in an easterly direction, scarcely daring to look behind them, and wishing to avoid attracting the notice of any passers-by.

The inhabitants of Alexandria had heard the account of the miraculous apparition the preceding night in the hall of Isis ; but they little suspected that the pretended goddess was this young girl, whom they saw leaving the walls of their town in so timid a manner. On her part, Zipporah was astonished at having frightened and put to flight the redoubtable Antony and all his courtiers, so she trembled with alarm when meeting the humblest passenger on the road. However, her fears were not realized ; our travellers continued their journey without any molestation ; although in order to disarm suspicion they had slackened their pace, they had soon left Alexandria far behind them. Turning aside from the usual road, they entered a part of the country almost like a desert, where they halted in a palm grove to give their horses time to rest.

From this height they were able to distinguish

Alexandria and all the tract of land between them and this town, consequently they were certain that no one was following them ; still Zipporah's dread and Eleazar's impatience did not allow them to enjoy long repose. They soon set off again at a short distance from the coast, and only stopped once that day to give their horses provender, for they had brought all necessary provisions for themselves, that they might not put up at any hostelry, at least during the first day.

As they advanced on their way, their cheerfulness returned ; it seemed to them that the air they breathed was fresher and sweeter ; the water they drank tasted purer and brighter ; the sky and the land they contemplated, appeared of far richer colours : so great a charm does imagination lend to the eyes of those who have lately regained sweet liberty !

Their hearts were overflowing with gratitude towards their deliverers. They lavished no end of praises on Valens, whom they regretted to see among the heathen ; and though Cleopatra had acted far less for Zipporah's interest than to gratify her own jealousy and ambition, she also shared in their praises.

That night they lodged in a large village which

had been pointed out to them; and our travellers, worn out with such a rapid ride, shut themselves up in their apartments. Early the next morning they continued their journey, renewed with fresh strength both moral and physical.

They traversed a fine district, extending through the interior of the country to the south of Damietta, watered by a number of streams. It was a succession of delicious gardens, and though the season was somewhat advanced, a large quantity of trees were still loaded with beautiful fruit.

The following days they found the aspect of the fields and gardens less pleasing, till at last they beheld the Great Desert a short way off. However, the part they had to pass through was less a desert in the modern acceptation of the term than a vast extent of uncultivated ground; there were even found hostelries here and there for the accommodation of travellers passing from one continent to another. Our Hebrews preferred having their refreshment in the open air, and only stopped at these hostelries to pass the night.

One day they were seated at the foot of a mountain covered with heath; before them lay the bare and sterile desert, whose monotony was only varied

by a few groups of palm trees, scattered far and wide, a species of landmark which made the immense extent of sandy sea all the more noticed. Wild goats skipped over the rocks; advancing into the plain, and some way off, might be seen a caravan leaving the desert.

Zipporah had left her father's side for a moment, and was watching the graceful bounds of a young kid near its mother, which seemed teaching it to leap in and out of the bushes, when suddenly a bear, coming out of the copse adjoining, rushed on the two animals, growling terribly. The terror caused by this unexpected attack so affected the young girl, who was almost in the bear's way, that it was more than her body spent with fatigue, and her mind agitated by so many anxieties and dangers, could stand. She came back to her father's side, pale and worn out, and confessed what she had not mentioned before for fear of alarming him, that for two days she had felt several symptoms of sickness.

Eleazar at once determined not to enter the desert until his daughter had regained her strength, and he chose as his sojourn a village with scattered houses, where travellers coming from the desert usually stopped.

It was not difficult to procure repose of body for Zipporah, but it was not so easy to restore peace to her mind. Amid the uneasiness and fears that had pursued her since she had left Alexandria, she dreaded Antony's anger for her father, if the Romans should take Jerusalem again ; and thinking of Valens, she was unable to bear the thought that from one moment to another he might, as a Roman, be obliged to attack the Jews, and even those to whom he had rendered such eminent services. The result of these melancholy reflections was a low fever, lasting several days, in spite of the untiring care of Eleazar and Zechariah ; and three weeks passed away before Zipporah was in a fit state to continue her travels. Notwithstanding all the secret anxiety oppressing her heart, she roused herself to appear as calm and tranquil as usual ; and it was with a lively manner that she informed her father she was quite ready to start.

Having provided themselves with necessary provisions, our travellers mounted their horses, and, climbing the hill where the bear had frightened Zipporah so much, they again saw the desert before them. At that moment a small caravan was entering it ; they joined it, and performed the

tedious journey without any accident worthy of notice.

Very soon they drew nigh a chain of mountains forming the western frontier of Judea, and their hearts were filled with a joy as pious as it was sweet. They finished their travels with so much spirit, that any one might have fancied they were just on the point of starting.

Ascending the heights of Beth-dagon, they beheld once more the white towers and high walls of Jerusalem, surrounded in all their magnificence with a girdle of hills and rocks.

‘O Jerusalem!’ exclaimed Eleazar, ‘O thou, the citadel of God! the mountain chosen by Jehovah! Hail! hail, O Zion! Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces!’

Transported with joy, he got off his horse, kissed the ground, and taking up a small quantity of earth, he pressed it to his heart, as if the soil that he trod was precious and sacred to him.

‘O my child!’ he added, embracing Zipporah with tenderness, ‘I wished to shelter thee from danger, and I led thee into a place where thy footsteps have been surrounded by pitfalls and snares. But console thyself. God permitted these trials to con-

firm thy faith, and the victory thou hast been enabled to gain over thy foes has in itself been the greatest reward.'

Tears of silent joy flowed down the cheeks of the young Jewish maiden. Her gaze remained fixed on Jerusalem, for her heart was too full of gratitude to Heaven to allow her to do else than look and weep.

Zechariah and Jehoiakim were at a loss how to express their happiness. In their impatience to arrive at the object of their desires, they got off their horses, then remounted, pretty well every moment, and uttered cries that the echoes of the rocks made still more sonorous, by repeating them and multiplying them.

When they began to descend the mountain, the travellers united their voices to chant the 122d Psalm, '*Lætatus sum in his quæ dicta sunt mihi*,'—'I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of

Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.'

This Psalm was usually sung by travellers on re-entering the Holy City returning from a journey ; and it was amid these transports of joy and enthusiasm, that after so long an absence, and one surrounded by so many dangers, they found themselves once more within the walls of Jerusalem.





CHAPTER XXXII.

NEW ANXIETIES.



ON their return to their beloved land, the travellers could not fail to notice the great changes that had taken place since their departure.

Antigonus, giving himself up more and more to the effeminate pleasures of his palace, as his usurped power became more precarious, abandoned the reins of government to his ministers and generals. The ambitious Rebekah, Eleazar's wife, had not omitted to take advantage of this cowardly indolence. By her intrigues as well as Oreb's and Jesse's, Antigonus' favourite, she had succeeded in obtaining unlimited influence over State affairs. However, nothing prospered under such an administration. The Greek Pappus, who commanded the Jewish troops, had, it is true, defeated Herod's army, and

the general had lost his life in the battle ; but in his turn Herod gained a signal victory over Pappus, who remained on the field of battle with a large part of his army ; and the party of Antigonius, not being able to hold out in open country, was obliged to take refuge in Jerusalem.

A gloomy consternation was diffused over the Holy City, where trouble reigned, augmented by the hatred of factions. These various factions only sought to destroy one another ; conspiracies against the king were being constantly discovered, and the ringleaders were punished with the greatest rigour. The intelligence that Antony had decided to uphold Herod's pretensions, as well as to give him a Roman army to lay siege to Jerusalem, had tended to excite the populace to the highest pitch, sometimes menacing the usurping monarch, at others giving vent to imprecations against the accursed heathen who dared attack the city of God, the Holy Zion.

As soon as our travellers had purified themselves from all their impurities by a solemn offering, Eleazar and his kinsman went to the palace to give up the jewels to Antigonius, and inform him of the sad result of their mission. They found him at table with his courtiers.

Having dismissed the dancing-girls and musicians, Antigonus received his ambassador with a languishing smile; and instead of conversing on the object of his journey, he began by inquiring whether he had brought back the beautiful Zipporah.

‘Yes,’ said Eleazar, scarcely able to master his indignation, ‘she is back at Jerusalem after many dangers and sufferings. May Heaven grant that she may not meet with others within the walls of the Holy City!’

These words had been particularly intended for Oreb, whom Eleazar had remarked among the guests. The proud Pharisee seemed to understand what was meant; he lowered his eyes and blushed.

‘Do not be angry, Rabbi Eleazar,’ said the king. ‘Here we know naught but pleasure; everything of a contrary nature ought to be kept away. Let us hear about your journey. Tell me what has happened to you, although I guess already by your features that you have no agreeable intelligence to communicate.’

‘Prince, you have said it. We have nothing to hope for from the Roman government, nor from Marc Antony, who has refused your gifts. The

only resource we have is in our own strength, even if that now remains to us.'

'Come, come! do not let us lose courage. My jewels are returned to me; that is already something gained. But what said the haughty heathen to you?'

Eleazar told him. Antigonus, whose character, before excesses of all sorts had enervated him, had been quick and bold, appeared stung at the contempt shown him by the triumvir. His dull eyes became animated, his pale cheeks turned purple and burning, and, placing his hand on his sword, he rose, calling out with energy: 'Let them come! let them come! Herod the Idumean, and Antony the uncircumcised heathen! Let them bring their cohorts and plant their eagles before the walls of Jerusalem! . . . They will remain there, like the Chaldeans when they besieged Tyre, until their heads become bald under their helmets. We will redden our swords with their blood, and the ravens of Palestine will fatten on their flesh.'

'Yes, yes,' said the courtiers, somewhat surprised at this fit of enthusiasm, little expected by them; 'the blood of the valiant Asmoneans flows in the veins of our king. He will be as redoubtable for

the Romans as the illustrious Judas Maccabeus was for the Greeks.'

Eleazar shook his head sadly and was silent. Meantime Antigonus, whom the remembrance of more fortunate times had roused from his lethargy, relapsed into the same indolent state; and filling a large goblet with spiced wine, he emptied it at one draught, to recover from the unusual effort he had just made. This beverage completely banished every noble and manly thought from his heart, and he became precisely what he was before this sudden outburst. Eleazar left him to finish his orgie, and returned home.

Zipporah's absence had been so long and so painful, that, in finding herself again within the walls of her native town, she thought she saw an old friend; but the coolness with which she was received by Rebekah, and the fear she experienced for the misfortunes threatening Jerusalem, subdued her delight so much that she fell unconsciously into profound melancholy.

On whatever side she turned her eyes, she could find nothing to mitigate her sorrow. Jerusalem was sad and dull, as if a thick cloud covered the city with a veil. Each family bore some share of the

public dreariness, and Eleazar's was not exempt from this species of general mourning. The house of itself, from its antiquity, its high walls, its enclosure of blackened wood, suggested grave thoughts, and Zipporah could only sigh as she walked through it.

In spite of her fatigue, she passed the greater part of the first night in pondering all that had happened to her during her absence from the paternal roof. Like her father, she had hoped to find an asylum at Rome against all the hateful manœuvres of Oreb. Finding herself again at Jerusalem, she saw herself exposed to his persecutions, and she feared his odium as much as she despised his love.

The confidence that Sihor's predictions had imparted to her, gave her the desire to consult him on the destiny of the Holy City ; but she heard that the prophet showed himself but very rarely amid the tombs and caverns ; that he appeared and disappeared like a phantom, without any one being able to find out his retreat. So Zipporah was obliged to confine her anxiety to her own breast. She did not even dare mention it to her father, as he had many other sorrows ; but she determined to open her heart to Paulina, as soon as she could pay a visit to this devoted friend.

One part of her fears was realized on the morrow after her return to Jerusalem. She was just going out of her room to visit Paulina, when her step-mother entered unexpectedly.

‘You are going out very early, my daughter,’ said Rebekah, with a proud and sneering look. ‘Have you so soon recovered from your fatigue? However, it seems to me that you ought rather to enjoy the sweet peace of the paternal roof. If Eleazar had listened to me, you would have remained with me, and at this very hour you would be the wife of one of the most powerful men at Jerusalem. But no. Your father must throw you into the wolf’s jaws, into the clutches of the enemy. . . . Well, you are back again ; we must now think of what remains to be done. You are going to have a visit which probably will not suit you ; but if you do not wish to incur my anger and the hatred of a man who loves you, notwithstanding your scorn, recollect all I told you before, and profit by it.’

She then left the room, and returned with Oreb. Zipporah did not allow the hypocrite time to speak. Advancing to meet him with dignified ease, though her eyes were fixed on the ground, she said to him :

‘Before presenting me your flattering homage,

deign to listen to me. If you really love me as you say, I thank you for the honour you confer upon me; but I can neither command my heart nor give it you. If your protestations are not sincere, why do you wish me to believe them? My father has told you that he intends me to be free in the choice of a husband. He would suffer too painfully in seeing me contract a union contrary to my own happiness.'

'So,' replied Oreb, 'you would consider yourself unfortunate if you belonged to me?'

'Domestic happiness above all depends on conformity of feelings and inclinations.'

'That is to say, you despise both my feelings and my inclinations?'

Zipporah made no reply, but her silence thus expressed her thoughts. Oreb became furious. He wished to speak; rage prevented him. Giving the young maiden a look in which were plainly depicted all the unruly passions of his soul, he rushed from the room.

'Well,' said Rebekah, after useless efforts to detain the Pharisee, 'you have proved yourself a heroine, my daughter. May you never have cause to repent of it!'

‘Mother,’ replied Zipporah, ‘one can only repent of the evil one has committed, and my conscience reproaches me with nothing; but the fury of this man shows that peace does not reign in his heart. When I saw him leave this apartment with his fierce look and threatening gestures, my memory recalled the first night of my journey. I had never suspected any one of the disgraceful means employed to induce me to return to the Holy City; now I begin to think that Oreb had something to do in it.’

These few words made the colour mount to Rebekah’s forehead. She tried, but in vain, to recover her composure; and going out of the room, she left her stepdaughter to suspect that she too had been concerned in the plot of which she had accused the Pharisee.

Having recovered from her agitation, Zipporah went to her father’s room, resolved to tell him all her trouble; but he had left the house. So, calling one of her women, she set out on the road leading to Paulina’s dwelling.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

A TRUE FRIEND.

SINCE the departure of her young friend, Paulina had recovered her strength, and her health was quite restored when Zipporah returned to Jerusalem. During her absence she had written the letter we have mentioned to Eleazar, also another, which never reached him, as he had quitted Italy by that time. Imagine the joy felt by this pious proselyte when she heard of Zipporah's return! She ran to meet her, pressing her to her heart with such rapture as to be unable to utter a word for some time.

Zipporah, still feeling the effects of the scene between herself and Oreb, shed abundant tears; but it would have been difficult to say whether these tears were caused by her sufferings and fears,

er the joy of finding herself in her friend's arms. Paulina was too anxious to hear all particulars of her travels to allow Zipporah to give way very long to her emotions. She made her sit down near her, and begged her to gratify her curiosity.

Though the recital of Zipporah's suffering in the Temple of Cybele made the good Paulina shudder, the name of Valens seemed to produce an extraordinary effect on this lady ; she interrupted the young girl, asking her what she knew about that officer.

When Zipporah had told her all she had heard at Rome about the centurion :

‘And his family name?’ inquired Paulina eagerly.

‘I do not know it. I never heard this officer called anything but Valens. But your astonishment, Paulina, makes me think he is your brother.’

‘Indeed, my brother is named Valens. Oh how happy should I be if I heard that my brother was my friend's deliverer ! My heart would be relieved from an immense weight ; for God is my witness, the only wish I have in this world is to see him forsake the impious worship of our forefathers, and cleave to that of the true God. From what you have just told me, he has already made the first step towards truth.’

‘Let us hope, my dear friend. God is as good as He is powerful, He will hear your prayers.’

Then Zipporah continued her narration, and when she had finished it, Paulina embraced her again with all the affection of a mother, who has recovered a child that she had looked upon as lost to her.

‘Blessed be the God of Israel,’ said she, ‘who has preserved you in the midst of so many dangers, and has supported your faith under the terrible trials to which it has pleased God to subject you. Let us go to His holy Temple to return Him our thanks, and also to beseech Him to hasten the time when the dark places of the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.’

Going through the town, leaning on her friend’s arm, Zipporah saw with fresh emotion these venerable buildings, which took back her mind to epochs of remote antiquity. The holy inscriptions placed over the jambs of the doors of every house, and partly obliterated by time, formed a striking contrast with the sculptures of the heathen edifices to which her eyes had lately been accustomed, giving an air of novelty to the objects she had known so long.

The animated and busy scene before her was also characteristic of the Holy City. Numerous priests,

with long beards and capacious robes, came and went on all sides, engaged in making preparations for the 'Feast of Lanterns,' instituted in memory of the purification of the Temple by the famous Judas Maccabeus.

Just then the sacred music was heard in the interior; the echoes of this vast building repeated the sound of the silver trumpets; the Levites chanted in chorus, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins,' etc.

Deeply moved, Zipporah continued to listen to the sublime song, her cheeks wet with tears. After prayers, she returned to her father's house accompanied by Paulina.

Eleazar had just come in. He welcomed his daughter's friend most graciously, thanked her for the advice she had given him before his departure for Italy, and said, 'You recommended me to be prudent; but how could I witness so many absurdities without the blood boiling in my veins? Thanks be to God! I am here safe from this tower

of Babel where I expected to be lost. I congratulate you most sincerely that you are safe from it likewise! To-day, I understand more than ever that your heart was too noble to be satisfied in this Rome, the centre of every abomination, and which unfortunately only deserves but too well the title of Queen of the Earth. And thou, too, unfortunate Jerusalem! how great and lamentable is thy blindness! It is all in vain that thy inhabitants repeat incessantly, "The Temple of God, the Temple of God is among us!" as though this sacred edifice could protect them of itself. The Lord may yet destroy it, as He destroyed the beautiful and glorious one built by Solomon.'

Whilst thus speaking, his eyes had been fixed on the Temple plainly visible from the terrace. His emotion was very great, and he stood looking at the holy building in mournful silence.

Bidding Eleazar farewell, and kissing his hand, Paulina embraced her friend and left them: Eleazar went to the palace, and Zipporah returned to her own room.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

POLITICAL CRISIS.



REB had not allowed himself to be cast down by the reception granted him by Zipporah on her return to Palestine. Sometimes trying flattery, sometimes having recourse to insinuations resembling threats, from day to day he became more and more hateful in the eyes of her whose will he wished to force. Vainly had Eleazar tried to make him desist from his persecutions, as distressing as they were useless. Rebekah only seemed the more determined to encourage him to cherish hope, whilst she neglected no means to overcome her stepdaughter's opposition. Not a day passed without her reproaching this poor child in the bitterest terms for refusing to marry a man who was so powerful in the state,

telling her that he held in his hands the fate of the whole family whom he asked to honour by his alliance. But, while time was passing in so sad and monotonous a manner for Zipporah, great events were on the eve of happening, which would prevent private sorrows or family dissensions being thought of for a moment.

All private schemes, with whatever energy they had been pursued until now, were forgotten as the fearful crisis drew nigh, which might expose the fortune, honour, and life of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The clash of arms was heard on all sides at the same time. Every day the noise became more frightful, and at length the cries of an immense multitude, rushing into the capital, where they imagined themselves in greater safety, announced the near approach of the storm about to burst upon the devoted city.

As is usual in such cases, fear and discontent exaggerated at first the enemy's strength. All knew that a Roman army fought for Herod, and no one stopped to inquire whether it was a large or a small one. In reality, each felt that this was merely a secondary consideration, because when Rome undertook a war, however distant it might

be, however insignificant the cause, the sole question for her was to know if her arms would appear invincible,—of this she was resolved to convince the world ; and every one knew that, to succeed in her designs, she would expend even her last talent, and would send forth her very last cohort.

The Jews hung arms and bucklers on the walls, as though to defy the besiegers. All the fortifications had been repaired, and a numerous guard placed in them. The youths, and all the citizens capable of bearing arms, were incorporated into a regular army and thoroughly drilled. Everywhere might be seen cuirasses and helmets, swords and lances, being furbished and sharpened by the youngest and the eldest with an ardour not to be expected at their age ; and they looked with admiration on the company of Antigonus' guards, the only troop of cavalry they had in the city, the large banner of the Asmoneans floating over their heads, whilst the crowd around them repeated in a loud voice the war-cry of the Maccabees, ' God and our country.' Was this an idle cry, or a sober reality ? Was this a scene ennobled by piety as at the time of Judas Maccabeus ? Zipporah could not remain insensible to the scenes we have endeavoured to

describe. Calm and tranquil as she always seemed to be, her heart harboured a feeling of patriotism which only awaited the signal to manifest itself with all her usual enthusiasm. At the sight of the dangers menacing her people, she forgot her own troubles to devote herself entirely to the cause of God and her native land. When she went to visit the tombs of the prophets, she usually passed several hours in these gloomy vaults, meditating on the past grandeur of Jerusalem, as well as the threatening prophecies that God had pronounced upon this guilty city by the mouth of His messengers.

Eleazar witnessed his daughter's enthusiasm with satisfaction. He knew it to be pure, and recalling to his mind the example of Deborah, and other women whom the Lord had made use of to confound the pride of the enemies of His chosen people, he thought that it might be made useful to the interests of the Holy City. Yielding to the entreaties of his friends, who shared his opinions, he induced Zipporah to take her psaltery and to sing sacred hymns to the troops, when they assembled both morning and evening for drill.

Zipporah obeyed, and she acquitted herself of this fresh duty, which she looked upon as a holy

one, with such pure fervour, she seemed so truly inspired, that the soldiers venerated her as an instrument selected by the Lord for the accomplishment of some great design. They inquired for her loudly when she did not arrive at the accustomed hour ; and when she sang, they felt themselves inflamed with a courage that seemed to them a far more certain omen of victory than any of the visions talked of by the soothsayers.





CHAPTER XXXV.

SAD OMENS.

HIS courage, which Zipporah's accents almost wrought up to frenzy, was soon to be put to the test. Each day the spies and fugitives who arrived at Jerusalem announced the approach of Herod's army, advancing by short day journeys. From daylight to nightfall might be seen an anxious crowd assembling on the city walls, on the terraces of the Temple, on Mount Zion, on all the most elevated points, on the look-out for the enemy. At last a cloud of dust rising over the top of a distant mountain, and across which arms might be seen glittering when the rays of the sun struck them, appeared like the cloudy precursor of the storm.

Immediately the priests sounded the alarm, and it spread through the whole city. Some timid Jews

tore their garments, making great lamentation ; covered their heads with ashes, and prostrated themselves to the earth, invoking succour from Heaven. Others, seized with sudden rage, on hearing the sound of the trumpets, struck their bucklers with their arms, running about the streets like demoniacs. They uttered threats and curses ; they swore that their vengeance would exterminate the idolaters, and picking up handfuls of sand, they threw it into the air, showing thereby that they would grind all their foes into dust. But the great mass of the people appeared stupified with terror ; each seemed to have taken root on the spot he occupied, and watched the movements of the enemy's army in mournful silence.

It descended the mountain, sometimes visible, sometimes enveloped in dust ; but its distance was still too considerable to allow one to judge of its strength. However, according to the time it took to descend, it was settled that it was a large army. It disappeared at length in the valley, and the dust subsided. The impatience and general uneasiness did not permit the Jews to turn away their gaze from the side where they had seen the danger for the first time.

‘They have placed their camp in the valley,’ said one; ‘They dare not approach any nearer the bulwark of the King of Heaven,’ cried another; others screamed out, ‘The Lord has struck them like Sennacherib’s army! The earth has swallowed them up like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram!’

However, this too flattering illusion was soon to be dispelled. From the height of the second mountain rose a fresh cloud of dust, which the rays of the sun made as the smoke of a vast conflagration. A moment afterwards, might be seen on the table-land several squadrons of cavalry; in the centre of each floated an ensign; then were other troops visible, as many on foot as on horseback, followed by elephants and camels coming along slowly, and disappearing again one after another in the valley.

Some time passed before the Roman columns showed themselves in the vicinity of the Mount of Olives. Their exterior offered nothing of the splendour that had been expected. Their long march in sandy valleys had tarnished their armour, and the golden eagles towering above each cohort; but there was something imposing in the movements of these warriors advancing in close ranks like a moving rampart, bristling with steel and bronze.

The sound of trumpets ordered a general halt, the columns divided, the squadrons spread themselves over the height, without showing the least emotion at the sight of the place they were to subdue.

The approach of Herod's forces with his Syrians, and the other auxiliaries charged with escorting the baggage belonging to the army,—the battering-rams and the other war machinery,—offered quite another aspect. Savage and ferocious troops of all colours, from the black Ethiopian to the barbarians of the North with fair hair, advanced pompously, but without order, shaking their banners and uttering furious cries. Afterwards came enormous elephants, some dragging machines, others carrying towers filled with armed men on their back. They were followed by a multitude of other beasts of burden, and vehicles of every description, as though all the corners of the earth had been put into requisition to besiege the Holy City.

In the midst of the crowd filling the galleries of the Temple, and covering all the towers and walls of Jerusalem, it is true that furious cries were heard responding to those uttered by Herod's army, but the heart of most of the Hebrews was oppressed at

the sight of the silent ranks of the Roman soldiers. Notwithstanding her enthusiasm, Zipporah herself at the view had shuddered in reflecting on the frightful struggle that was about to take place between a power like that of Rome, and a proud and warlike people as the Jews had always shown themselves, when fighting for the Temple of the Lord.

‘If God is for us,’ said Eleazar to her, ‘what have we to fear? He will reanimate our courage and strengthen our hearts in this moment of danger. Hands raised to heaven to implore divine aid, will disperse our foes much more surely than hands armed with javelins. Come, my child, let us go into my closet and pray.’

He entered it with his daughter; both of them fell on their knees; they prostrated themselves before the Lord, beseeching Him to have pity on Jerusalem. When they had finished praying, Eleazar said to Zipporah: ‘Now I feel, I will not say more reassured, for I have strange presentiments, but at least more resigned. However, let thy sweet voice kindle fresh courage in me. Take thy psaltery, my child, and sing me some holy song which will recall the deliverance of our people from dangers similar to those which threaten us to-day.’

‘Shall I sing you the song of Deborah, and of Barak son of Abinoam, after their victory over the Canaanites?’

‘Yes; and may the destruction of our enemies be as complete as that of Sisera’s army.’

‘Amen!’ replied the young girl; and taking her instrument, she sang immediately this sublime song: ‘Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves,’ and so on, as contained in the 5th chapter of Judges. When she had finished singing it, her father repeated in a loud and distinct voice the last verse: ‘So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.’

The evening of this important day, Zipporah went to see her friend Paulina. She found her in tears, and before knowing the reason of her weeping, she felt her own tears flow without being able to stop them.

‘My dear Zipporah,’ said the proselyte to her, pressing her hand most affectionately, ‘the day I so much dreaded for Jerusalem is here! I am well aware that the Lord can destroy with His breath all the powers of the world; but when I reflect that hitherto He has always granted victory to the

Romans, that He allowed Pompey to profane the Sanctuary by his presence, oh, then I tremble lest greater evils fall upon this city, on the persons I love so much, on you, my child—on your esteemed father. And my brother, where is he? Ah, should he be found in the ranks of the foe, should he too come to attack the people whom I have chosen, the country I have adopted!’

‘I have no such fears, Paulina,’ replied Eleazar’s daughter; ‘for I believe that the one who saved me at two different times was no other than your brother. Be sure, then, that he will never visit as an enemy those who owe him both life and honour. Let us hope! if God chastises us, it is because He loves us; His wrath will not last for ever; it will be appeased as soon as we humble ourselves before Him, and when we acknowledge our iniquities and our ingratitude. Let us go and address our prayers to Him from the tombs of the prophets before the foe can prevent our leaving the city. Perhaps by to-morrow we may be unable to do so.’

Yielding to the young maiden’s prayers, in spite of the little desire she felt to go out, Paulina accompanied her beyond the walls into the valley of Jehoshaphat.

Leaving Absalom's Pillar on their left, they advanced as far as the mountain afterwards named 'Aceldama' (where the traitor Judas fell headlong and burst asunder); then ascending a certain elevation, they seated themselves on a point of a rock near the tomb of one of the prophets, to give one look at Jerusalem.

The sun, just then vanishing behind the Mount of Zion, still lighted the upper part of the highest buildings and the three summits of the Mount of Olives, on which their foes were encamped. Their tents were easily distinguishable, and their arms were seen glittering in the distance. But whilst admiring this magnificent scene, our two friends could not avoid being overpowered with deep feelings; they thought that perhaps the sacred precincts of Jerusalem would be very soon profaned by riot, pillage, and bloodshed. They remained absorbed in these sad thoughts until after the sun had set. At length, remembering that they were alone, and at a short distance from the enemy, they retraced their steps. At the moment when they were about to re-enter the city, they noticed on a hill a man of majestic stature, whose face was lighted up from a fire burning on a neighbouring tower. They drew

near, and Zipporah at once recognised Sihor's venerable features.

Turning towards the Holy City, and extending his arms on that side, the prophet exclaimed in a strong and solemn voice: 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! the wine-press is full, the vats overflow, the measure of thy iniquities is full. Already the Roman has scaled thy strongest walls and violated thy Sanctuary; on the anniversary of that very day, the foot of the Roman soldier shall again tread down the head of the queen of cities. Still a few years, and thy fate shall be stamped with its last seal. In punishment of the greatest of thy crimes (*the deicide*), thou shalt become a desert, the abode of wild beasts; the light of thy lamps shall be extinguished, and the voice of man shall no more be heard within thy walls. Woe, woe to thee, Jerusalem!'

Zipporah and her companion continued their walk back to the city without having strength to express to each other the melancholy thoughts that these words had produced on their spirits. They separated in silence, but pressing each other's hand, their trembling state spoke far more eloquently than any speech all the sad feelings which oppressed them.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

SIEGE OF JERUSALEM.

IN spite of her faith in Sihor's predictions, Zipporah did not feel her enthusiasm diminish ; for these prophecies might only be a threat, and she continued to excite the ardour of the troops by the sounds of her harp and voice.

The strict discipline reigning in the Roman camp allowed no hope of surprising it ; but they were anxious to attack Herod's before he could finish his entrenchments ; consequently they made great preparations, and took all necessary precautions to guarantee the success of this enterprise, for, with a people so superstitious as the Jews, all might be said to depend on the result of the first encounter. To recall to their remembrance similar exploits which had terminated gloriously for their people in bygone days, Zipporah composed warlike songs

on the valour of Jonathan and his armour-bearer, who entered the camp of the Philistines whilst they slept, and threw the army into confusion ; for ‘there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people ; the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked : so it was a very great trembling ;’ also on the great victory gained by Judas Maccabeus, when he surprised the tent of Lysias, and slew four thousand men, and the greater part of his elephants.

Such a style for arousing the ardour of the army could not fail of success. The intrepidity with which their ancient glory inspired them, incited them to fresh exploits, and the troops selected to make the sally burned with impatience to be led forth to battle.

At the special request of several chiefs of the detachment, Zipporah consented to accompany them a certain distance from the town. They had taken for their rallying-word the same as Judas Maccabeus had given his soldiers when about to attack the general Lysias : ‘ *Victory is of the Lord !* ’ and the troops had welcomed it with transports of joy, as offering a sacred and a favourable augury.

During the intervals of the exhortations addressed

to them by the priests marching at their head, reminding them that they were going to fight against impious nations, for the laws, the Temple, the city, and the land of Jerusalem, Zipporah sang whilst accompanying herself on her instrument, and only ceased when the detachment had left the gates of the town. It was midnight when the Jews advanced silently amidst the most profound darkness to the heights where Herod's army had encamped. Having accompanied them as far as the bridge across the Kedron, Zipporah retired to a cottage to await their return, and to implore the Lord to bring them back victorious.

How can I describe her ever increasing anxiety, when, seated in solitude, in silence, in obscurity, she listened for the slightest sound! At length the night breezes wafted a confused noise to her ears, telling of a scene of blood and death on the mountain.

After an hour's anguish, she saw her people returning in the delirium of disorder and victory. Herod's soldiers had been seized with a panic. They had fled, leaving their enemies masters of the field. The Jews came back to Jerusalem laden with spoils at the very moment when the first rays of the sun began to gild the mountains on the horizon.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem, ever ready to give way to foolish and often imprudent joy, having waited impatiently the issue of the battle, were now attacked with a distracted frenzy. Youths and old men wept, laughed, sang, embraced one another, ran to spread the happy news from one quarter of the town to another, and everywhere were welcomed with the same transports of joy. In the course of the day, a villager, coming secretly out of a ravine, presented himself at the city gates. He said he was charged with a message for Eleazar. They immediately led him to the Temple, where they found the deputy high priest with his daughter. The messenger delivered the letter, and without waiting for any answer, he went away.

Eleazar hastened to break the thread surrounding the roll. Having unwrapped it, he read the following lines :

‘Do not be alarmed if you hear that I am among the besiegers. The order of my superior officers called me thither ; but I do not come as a foe. I will spare all your soldiers who may fall into my power, because they are your fellow-citizens ; and should Heaven let you fall into the hands of the Romans, you and your amiable daughter, you will

find in me a friend who will consider himself fortunate to render you all the services he possibly can.

VALENS.'

Eleazar showed this letter to his daughter, and it was agreed to keep it a secret from Paulina, for fear of increasing her alarm if she recognised her brother's writing.

Meantime the city was soon blockaded on all sides, and the siege began in earnest. It is not our wish to usurp the historian's province by detailing the operations of this siege, which, unfortunately for all the Jews, only lasted far too long; but by degrees, as the enemies advanced their lines of circumvallation, the encounters between the two parties became still more furious, more desperate, and more murderous. The Jews, renowned in all ages for their valour on the field of battle, and for the obstinacy with which they defended their holy places and their strongholds, did not detract from their former glory. Almost every day they made fresh sallies, uttering loud cries, striking with their arms on their bucklers, and rushing on their foes with an impetuosity amounting to fury.

But though they often drove back Herod's troops,

their collision was as with an iron wall when it was directed against the Roman legions. However, many thousand Jews were so zealous to sacrifice themselves, even without the most remote hope of success, that Sosius, the general of the besieging army, had some reason for saying: 'When we slay these fanatics, it is not only depriving them of life; it is making them a gift of death.'

Several times during the night they burnt the stockades and the war machinery belonging to their enemies. They met ruses by stratagems; no sooner was a wall thrown down, than they replaced it by entrenchments; they responded to a mine by a countermine; and, as if the surface of the earth was not sufficient to fight upon, the workmen employed in these subterranean labours sometimes met and attacked each other furiously with no other implements than their tools.

The valour, and even the despair, of the Jewish people could not long resist the discipline, the experience, and the military science so superior to their own. Two of their principal walls had been already overthrown, the lower part of the town had been carried by assault, and discouragement began to glide into every heart, though without impairing

the efforts of those who still held the upper part of the city and the Temple, the two strongest points of Jerusalem.

Rebekah, Oreb, and the other confederates had possession of one of the towers which the Romans were already undermining; and notwithstanding the difficulty attending their design, they had determined to open the gates of Jerusalem to her inveterate enemies. Rebekah's main object was worthy of her ambition. She wished to deliver up the town, on condition that the Romans should recognise as king of Judea her son by a former marriage, and likewise Eleazar her husband as high priest. The alliance of Herod with idolaters, so she said to her accomplices, has made his name odious throughout the land. Besides, he is not a true Hebrew, for his mother was an Idumean. My son belongs to the illustrious family of the Maccabees. Hebrew blood flows unmixed in his veins; and although he is still very young, his martial character renders him much more worthy of the crown than this cowardly and effeminate Antigonus, the slave of indolence and debauchery. The Romans only want money. If we pay them tribute as hitherto, and merely flatter their pride, they will willingly retire, only too glad

to avoid the hardships and the loss of men that a long siege would involve.

One day the confederates forgot that secrecy was one of the primary conditions to ensure the success of their plot ; and, actuated by fury, they uttered such loud cries that they were heard. The people became exasperated and shut them up in the tower, leaving them there, until their treason should be judged and punished as it deserved.

On the following day, the Romans brought their battering-rams close to the walls. By degrees, as the stones were loosened, they were replaced by wooden props, which they afterwards set on fire, notwithstanding the screams and the signals made them by the prisoners. Very soon the tower fell down with a horrible crash. This unfortunate end appeared in the eyes of the Jews as a divine chastisement, but it could not dispel the gloomy sentiments caused by the progress the besiegers were making, and likewise by Sihor's prophecies, which seemed on the eve of being fulfilled.

Sihor had predicted that the anniversary of the last taking of Jerusalem would be the day when the Roman would place his foot anew on the head of the queen of cities, and this hour was fast drawing nigh.

To calm the discontent which was beginning to show itself among the besieged, also to gratify their daring by assuming the offensive, it was resolved to make a sally, with a considerable body of forces, on the morning of the fatal day indicated by Sihor.

On their part, Sosius and Herod, believing that the anniversary of the taking of the city under Pompey would excite the bravery of their own troops, had also fixed upon it for storming the place.

While the Romans were busy preparing their arms and machines, the Jewish priests renewed their exhortations to the people. The courts of the Temple did not become less full of old men, women, and children, who came to beseech the God of armies to deliver their native land. The evening before, Zipporah went to see Paulina. She told her that the troops wished her to accompany them in their sally, and she begged her to pass the day which was to decide the fate of her beloved city with her dear father. Paulina's only reply was by weeping bitterly. A sad presentiment depressed her spirits, and she dared not avow it to her young friend. They separated sadly, and both of them passed the greater part of the night in prayer, awaiting the terrible morrow.



CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAST BATTLE.

THE morning chosen by both sides to make the last efforts appeared under a dull and dismal aspect. The wind seemed to wail around the fortifications of Jerusalem ; black clouds rolled slowly in the firmament, sometimes obscuring the sun, sometimes giving egress to a feeble ray, which had the appearance of covering the towers and walls with the lurid light of death.

It was reported that omens had been seen in the vapour darkening the air,—a stretched-out arm brandishing a naked sword ; seven golden vials pouring out divine wrath ; an eagle perched on a palm tree, and other wonders quite as frightful. The Jewish soldiers interpreted these apparitions as so many signs of the destruction of the Roman

army. They left the town, their hearts full of courage in the firm belief that God was about to work a new miracle in their behalf.

They were confirmed in this persuasion by the watchword given them: 'The help of God.' This was the one assumed by the valiant Judas Maccabeus when he fought with Nicanor, who was completely defeated, the rich spoils of the camp divided among the Jewish soldiers, and Nicanor's slave-merchants, by a just retribution, were themselves sold into slavery.

Zipporah accompanied them. The priests in their white robes marched at the head of the columns, animating the troops, sometimes by singing a psalm, sometimes by the piercing sounds of their silver trumpets.

The Jews left the city by the Gate of Benjamin, situated at the north-east of Jerusalem. Zipporah had intended to quit them and come back as soon as they had traversed the valley near the fortifications, and had reached the opposite heights. But scarcely had they ascended to the top, when they met a Roman cohort, which had come up on the other side, so that the two sides found themselves about a hundred paces from one another. The Jews uttered a loud cry, and rushed forward with such

fury, that their enemies, struck with one of those sudden panics from which even the Roman armies were not exempt, gave way and took flight, descending the mountain, pursued by all the Jewish forces.

Zipporah found herself carried away by the torrent, and it was with difficulty that she avoided being thrown down and trampled under foot. She was unable to stop herself in her involuntary run, until she arrived in the centre of the large valley extending to the base of the Mount of Olives.

The Romans stopped there. A part of the cohort had rallied, other bodies of troops came to support it, and the Jews, whose enthusiasm had increased by the idea that Heaven had declared itself on their side, fought with a terrible and desperate courage.

Dismayed by the clash of arms and the tumult of the battle, grieved to the heart by the sight of blood flowing around, Zipporah sought for some place of refuge, where she might escape this frightful sight, and secure herself from the arrows falling about her.

Several tombs had been excavated in the rocks situated at the base of the mountain opposite her. She ran to the nearest one, and having reached it

without any accident, she lay on the ground in the darkest corner, her body worn out with fatigue, her heart torn by the bloody scene she had just witnessed.

The noise of the combat continued to be heard for some time so near her, that she dared not hazard approaching the entrance of the cavern. This delay allowed her to recover her strength, but it could not allay her uneasiness. Meanwhile her compatriots had triumphed, and they had triumphed over the Romans! This of itself was a glorious exploit, and under any other circumstances would have overwhelmed her with joy, if Sihor's terrible prediction had not returned to her memory. At length the noise gradually died away, and she left the sepulchre. The stream of the battle had been towards the south, on the side of the garden of Gethsemane. Before her the earth was covered with the dead and the dying; but she no longer saw a single combatant. She was inclined to go back the road she had come, when she heard a loud voice proceed from the heights above her head. Raising her eyes, she saw Sihor standing on the point of a rock, apostrophizing again the Holy City.

‘It is come,’ cried he, ‘it is come, the anniversary of the day when Pompey scaled the ramparts! O

sinful Jerusalem! thou art about to humble thy proud head under the foot of the Roman victor! See! the Temple of the Lord is taken! the divine anger is manifest! Woe, woe to Jerusalem!’

More terror-stricken than ever, Zipporah ran again over the ground where she had been hurried along at the beginning of the fight. She was stopped at every step by corpses strewing the earth; she wished to turn away her eyes, but an irresistible impulse prevented her, and yet she trembled for fear of finding Valens among the slain.

By degrees, as she went forward, she saw the clouds thickening in the firmament: they seemed fighting in the air. A dismal obscurity covered the face of nature, and a violent peal of thunder was repeated by all the surrounding rocks. Zipporah redoubled her speed, and, her heart a prey to the most cutting anguish, she soon arrived on the hill, where the Jews had met the Roman cohort, and whence she had a view of the entire city.

A cry of horror escaped from her as soon as she got there. All the valley of Jehoshaphat was covered with armed men, elephants, with towers raised on wheels, and all the various machines then used in war and sieges, whilst they were making a

terrible assault on the place. From the top of some of these wooden towers the enemy had thrown bridges over the walls, and files of soldiers passed there without interruption, rushing into the place, taking possession of the streets one after another, and carrying consternation and death everywhere. The air re-echoed with confused cries, mixed with the prolonged sounds of the trumpet, the clash of the battering-rams beating down the fortifications, and the fall of enormous stones hurled with the catapults. The sky itself seemed to wish to add to the confusion: the lightning played across the clouds, followed by the noisy crash of thunder. Voices still more piercing arose in the air at the same moment, and were distinctly heard even in the midst of all this tumult.

Zipporah looked up and saw one of the towers constructed on the rocky height of Mount Moriah totter, then fall, with all those who were defending it, from this frightful eminence into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and bury among its ruins many hundreds of besieged and besiegers.

This awful catastrophe did not slacken the efforts made by the Jews, who continued to defend themselves with the blind rage of despair; and their foes

imbibed fresh courage in the certainty they felt of victory, and grew furious at the obstinate resistance the Jews still showed.

Distracted and broken-hearted, Zipporah turned away her eyes from this part of the valley and raised them towards the Temple. The centre of the sacred edifice was enveloped in a black smoke coming from the galleries, which the enemy had set on fire; and by the light of the conflagration she saw a Roman eagle fixed on the top of the inner wall, which proved that the Temple was in the power of the Romans.

Thousands of people had taken refuge there as in an inviolable sanctuary; some still shot arrows and flung stones against the besiegers; others, seeing the flames approach, preferred to expose themselves to a quicker death by throwing themselves down from the top of the galleries into the courts; a great number raised their hands to heaven, and in a heart-rending tone of voice implored its mercy.

‘My father, my father! I will perish with him!’ So cried Zipporah, as the sight of the frightful spectacle recalled to her Eleazar’s danger. She ran to rejoin him, when she was stopped by another scene which froze her with horror.

In a pool of blood, evidently proceeding from

several wounds, she saw the body of Valens stretched on the ground. His helmet was off, and though his countenance was already covered with deathly pallor, she saw a sweet and tranquil expression on his features—it might almost be called a smile. Zipporah closed his eyes. She made a step forwards in the direction of the town, but dizziness seized her, she uttered a deep groan, and fell beside the centurion in a state of unconsciousness.

Meantime the besiegers had made themselves masters of Jerusalem, and Antigonus could not escape the fate awaiting him.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, relates that, ‘in the tumult and confusion of the assault, he was so cowardly and pusillanimous, that, without regard for his rank and birth, he went out of the fortress of Baris and threw himself at the feet of Sosius. The Roman general showed no compassion for the unhappy monarch; he received him with an air of mockery, telling him that henceforth he must call him “Antigona” (the feminine of Antigonus). But though the king behaved like a woman, he was not treated as such. Sosius had him loaded with irons and thrown into prison.’

When he had placed the new king on his throne,

Sosius consecrated a golden crown to God ; and after the most degrading indignities, Antigonus was sent to Antony at Antioch, where, at Herod's earnest desire, he was put to death by the public executioner.

In him ended the race of the Maccabees or Asmoneans, after a period of nearly one hundred and thirty years. Thus the sceptre was departing from Judah, and according to the patriarch Jacob's dying prophecy, the advent of the long-expected Messiah was drawing nigh.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ROMAN CENTURION.

WHEN Zipporah opened her eyes she found herself under a tent, and lying on the grass. Her first thought was for her father.

‘My father!’ said she, ‘oh! where is my father?’

‘She is alive! she is alive!’ exclaimed Zechariah. ‘Ah! my dear Zipporah, you have been unconscious a long time, so long indeed, that we began to fear you would never be restored to us. What a frightful night we have passed!’

‘Zechariah,’ replied Zipporah, recognising her kinsman, ‘tell me, where is my father?’

‘I am going to fetch him. He is not far off.’

He went out, and, at the end of a few minutes, Zipporah found herself in Eleazar's arms.

‘Silence! silence!’ said Zechariah, putting his

finger to his lips. 'Moderate your joy; you are not aware whose rest you may disturb.'

'Come with me, my child,' added Eleazar; 'friends await thee.'

Zipporah, leaning on her father's arm, arose, and Eleazar conducted her to another tent pitched a few steps away. She was about to enter, when Paulina, having lifted the curtain, came out on tiptoe, and approaching her young friend, said: 'O my good Zipporah, I am so happy to see you again! I was in despair about you. Come, it is he, it is my brother!' and her voice was low and full of feeling.

Zipporah hastened her steps, and entered the tent, where she saw Valens lying on a litter. His features were pale and wasted, his eyes languid; but on recognising Eleazar's daughter, the happiness he felt seemed to revive his strength. He turned to her, saying: 'I bless your God, who is also mine, for having restored you to your father and your friends. Perhaps I have but a few moments to live. I wish to make use of them to declare before you, your father, and my dear sister, something that will fill you all with joy. Since your departure from Rome, I have read several times the sacred book which contains the principles of your faith, the history

of your people, and the laws by which they are governed. This reading has made me blush, I will not say for being an idolater, but for having disowned so many years the voice of Him who called me incessantly to the truth. O my sister, how guilty have I been towards thee! Thou didst implore me to open my eyes to the abyss when I was walking on its very brink; and instead of listening to thee, I heard nothing but my pride, and plunged deeper and deeper into the darkness of doubt and incredulity. Canst thou forgive me, Paulina, for having resented thy prayers, and even broken the sweet ties of our friendship, because thou wast attached to a worship which revolted my weak and proud reason? . . . I despised thee, as I despised all the Jews; but when in the amphitheatre I saw the necklace I had once given thee on the neck of a young Jewess, then I was ashamed, without exactly knowing why, of the unjust prejudice I had nourished against the disciples of Moses, and felt all my old affection for thee renewed in my breast. I had no doubt that the daughter of Antigonus' ambassador was thy friend; and as I knew her father's intercourse with Marc Antony would expose her to numerous dangers, I made a vow to save her at

every risk from the traps they might lay for her innocence. Heaven has granted me the strength and the opportunity of fulfilling this vow, in spite of the many risks I ran. Thou didst say in thy last letter, my sister, that thou wast in the habit of praying that the Lord would enlighten me ; well, if I have given thee any pain by not replying to thy letters, thou mayest rejoice to-day, for thy prayer has been answered. Yes, I am proud of declaring solemnly in the presence of you all, in the vicinity of the Holy City and of His Temple, that I believe in the God of the Hebrews, as the only one living and true God, that I have embraced His faith and the law of Moses, and that it is my wish to die in it.'

These words, spoken with an energy which made all around him weep with joy, completely wore out the strength of the wounded man. He let his hand fall into the one stretched out to him by his affectionate sister, and there was silence for some moments.

Afterwards he seemed to revive a little.

'Paulina,' said he, 'do not weep. Perhaps it is thy wish that I may not die just yet ; but already I feel that the hand of death is upon me. Pray for me, my friends, that the Lord may mercifully

pardon me the errors of my life. I have deplored them ever since I have known the truth; but if you join your prayers to mine, I can have more faith in believing that they are forgiven me, and I shall die more peaceably. Rabbi Eleazar, I beg your blessing.'

The deputy high priest approached the dying man, extended his arms over him to bless him, at the same time as Paulina knelt on the other side of the litter, hiding her face in her hands, weeping and praying. 'May the blessing of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob descend on thee, my son!' said Eleazar in a powerful but moved voice. 'May His holy angels receive thy spirit, and carry it to the eternal abodes!'

He had not finished uttering the last words, before Valens breathed a deep sigh, and his soul returned to its Maker.

Paulina, with that strength of mind, the powerful result of the living faith animating her, bent over her brother's body, closed his eyes, and continued to pray. Until now, grief had prevented her from speaking; but when she had paid this last tribute of sisterly affection, she arose, saying to Eleazar and his daughter:

‘My friends, may God’s holy will be done! He has been very merciful to my brother; join with me in thanking Him!’

This effort of faith over nature completely overwhelmed Paulina. She staggered; and Zipporah was obliged to hurry her away from the tent, to remove her from the melancholy sight she had just witnessed.

Whilst our two friends gave way to their sorrow, Eleazar and Zechariah threw off the clothes from the body of Valens. Having washed him, they wrapped him up in a linen cloth, which they had managed to purchase in a neighbouring cottage, and carried it to the bottom of the valley, where they found some open graves for strangers. There they were joined by Zipporah and Paulina. The latter gave one last fond look at the mortal remains of her beloved brother, and continued kneeling at the grave until Eleazar and his kinsman had hidden from her sight one whom she would see no more in this world.

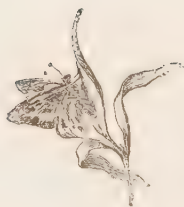
‘May he rest in peace!’ said Eleazar; and all four went away in sad silence.

To explain this scene, it is necessary to go back a little. According to Zipporah’s earnest request,

Paulina had gone to be with Eleazar at the beginning of the assault, and Zechariah had joined them. Anxious at not seeing his daughter, when Jerusalem was already in the power of the Romans, he had escaped from the Temple with his kinsman and the proselyte, taking the same road as the Hebrews had in their sally. They found Zipporah lying in a state of unconsciousness near the wreck of her psaltery, which had been broken in her fall. At first her father imagined that she had perished, the victim of the duties imposed on her by her fellow-citizens; and he abandoned himself to all the violence of grief, when Zechariah, raising the body of the young maiden, perceived that she had only fainted.

Whilst this was going on, Paulina's attention was drawn to the motionless body of a Roman stretched out near Zipporah. It seemed to her that she had seen the girdle before to which his sword was fastened, for it was not unsheathed. With a trembling heart she examines his features, utters a cry of surprise and sorrow: she has recognised her brother. Several tents were abandoned on the height; Eleazar and Zechariah carried thither in succession Valens and Zipporah. Thanks to the care lavished on him, the

centurion soon recovered consciousness, though unable to speak. Zipporah, on the contrary, continued in a swoon until the morning of the next day, when Zechariah informed her that her father was near her.





CHAPTER XXXIX.

CONCLUSION.

HLEAZAR'S name had been placed on the proscription list drawn up by Herod ; but this new king, fearing to exasperate the Jews by putting to death a man whom they venerated on account of his piety and patriotism, granted him his life on condition that he left Jerusalem.

The pious old man retired to Bethlehem with his daughter and Paulina, who as well as Zechariah resolved never to leave him ; but he was overcome with the weight of sorrow Herod's conduct caused him. Without any due regard to the laws and ordinances of Moses, this prince had nominated a high priest unworthy to exercise these holy functions, and had given him a guard to defend him. Very soon afterwards, he caused a theatre to be built at the west of the Temple, and a hippodrome on Mount Zion ; he erected statues, established quinquennial games in

honour of Augustus, and went so far as to consecrate a temple to him. Finally, he committed the sacrilege of violating the tombs of the ancient kings to seek for treasures, not even respecting those of David and Solomon. But this impious act, which took place at night and in Herod's presence, did not escape unpunished ; for, from the bottom of the cavern where the remains of these two monarchs had been placed, a flame issued, killing two of his guards ; and Herod, regarding their death as a punishment for his crime, raised an expiatory monument in the form of a superb mausoleum over the vault.

Eleazar was soon followed to the grave by Paulina, whose health had always been delicate.

Zipporah became the wife of the youngest son of the same Manasseh to whose care Eleazar had been so anxious to confide his lovely daughter on arriving at Rome. She had the happiness of contemplating in his lowly cradle the Desire of all nations, Him whom she had so long wished to behold, the Messiah promised to her forefathers, the Saviour of the world!

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